THE #1 WEB MARKETING AMAZON BESTSELLER: OVER 60,000 COPIES SOLD!

UPDATED DECEMBER 2015!

# 500 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TIPS

## ESSENTIAL ADVICE & STRATEGY FOR BUSINESS

FACEBOOK • TWITTER • GOOGLE + • YOUTUBE
LINKEDIN • PINTEREST • INSTAGRAM, & MORE!

PLUS OVER 250 FREE STEP-BY-STEP VIDEO TUTORIALS!



BY ANDREW MACARTHY

# 500 Social Media Marketing Tips: Essential Advice, Hints and Strategy for Business: Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Google+, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, and More!

**December 2015 Edition**
Copyright © 2012 - 2015 by Andrew Macarthy
Cover and internal design © Andrew Macarthy

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means including information storage and retrieval systems – except in the case of brief quotations in articles or reviews – without the permission in writing from its publisher, Andrew Macarthy.

All brand names and product names used in this book are trademarks, registered trademarks, or trade names of their respective holders. I am not associated with any product or vendor in this book.

Website: http://www.andrewmacarthy.com
Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/500socialmediatips
Twitter: http://www.twitter.com/andrewmacarthy
Pinterest: http://www.pinterest.com/andrewmacarthy
LinkedIn: http://www.linkedin.com/in/andrewmacarthy

This book was created using the Easy Kindle E-Book template available at www.ebooktemplatedownload.com. Download yours today!

# Table of Contents

500 Social Media Marketing Tips: Essential Advice, Hints and Strategy for Business: Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Google+, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, and More!

Table of Contents

Why Your Business Needs Social Media Marketing!

Before You Begin: Key Considerations For All Social Media Marketing

Explained: The Best Types of Content to Post on Social Media

Facebook Tips:  Marketing Strategy You'll Like and Share

Twitter Tips: Tweet Your Way to the Top

Google+ Tips:  Plus One Your Marketing Strategy

Pinterest Tips:  Pin Your Way to Marketing Perfection

LinkedIn Tips:  Network Like Clockwork

YouTube Tips:  Video Made the Marketing Star

Instagram Tips:  Snap-happy Marketing Strategy

Vine Tips:  Marvelous Marketing With Micro-Video

Snapchat Tips: Self-Destructing Social Media Marketing

Blogging Tips: Captivate With the Written Word

General Strategy for  Super Social Media Marketing

Free and Premium Social Media Video Tutorials: 250+ Videos and 8+ Hours of Content

FREE E-book Updates FOREVER

Download My Essential Social Media Marketing Premium Content Bundle

I Need You: Help Make This Book Even Better!

Hire Me: Social Media Design,  Analysis and Management

About the Author

One Last Thing...

# Why Your Business Needs Social Media Marketing!

Over the last decade, social media marketing has become an indispensable tool in the arsenal of brands and businesses of all kinds, with opportunities to build relationships, engage with customers, and increase sales like never before - and the stats back it up. A January 2014 survey by PewInternet revealed that 74% of adults in North America used social networking sites, including 82% of 30-49 year-olds and 89% of 18-29 year-olds. In addition, research from social media analysts Digitas predicts that the growth of social commerce could make it a business worth $30 billion before the end of 2017. And in a Social Media Examiner poll conducted in 2015, 91% of respondents said that social media marketing – worked on for at least 6 hours per week - increased exposure for their business. If you're not using social media at all, or your current strategy isn't working for you as well as you hoped, now is the time to make a change. You are about to learn over 500 expert hints and tips to effectively market your business across all of the most popular social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, and Pinterest. Each chapter is grouped broadly into several sections including profile optimization, content strategy, and advice on paid advertising.

Success in social media marketing results from building strong and long-lasting relationships with customers and professional contacts, and sharing the type of content and expertise that they will want to share onwards to their friends, family, and colleagues. This approach will help to attract and keep loyal customers and connections, and encourage brand ambassadors to sell your business for you – a complete reverse from the traditional marketing model! While this approach is a world away from the way traditional marketing works, this open, two-way communication is now what billions of consumers around the world expect from the businesses

and brands to whom they invest time and money. Direct selling *does* have a place, but as you’ll learn, it isn’t the “front and center” where social media marketing is concerned.

I hope you find the following advice helpful, whether you're a complete social media novice or a savvy individual looking for some extra expert tips to drive your business onto bigger and better things.

Do let me know how you get on by getting in touch via my social channels!

Andrew.

# Before You Begin: Key Considerations For All Social Media Marketing

Peer pressure, success stories in the media and general hype tell today's business owners that having a presence on social media is essential. That's not to say a business couldn't do well without utilizing social networking, but they'd certainly be missing out on a myriad of opportunities to build and grow. However, one of the biggest mistakes that a brand can make is to leap into social media marketing with no real clue of what they are going to do with it; only the vague hope it will somehow make their fortune. While there is a possibility that you get really lucky, in most cases this kind of unplanned approach will lead to unrealistic goal-setting, poor results, a huge waste of time, and ultimately a defeatist attitude that puts you off the idea of social media marketing completely. To ensure that this *doesn't* happen to you – and to give you the best chance of success - I urge you to digest the key considerations for social media marketing detailed below. By the end of this chapter, you will have a firm understanding of what kind of approach *works* for business on social media, and how to take your efforts in a well-planned, logical direction.

**Decide which social networks will work best for you**

Unless you're a big company with the resources to plow full speed ahead into every potentially viable social platform, chances are you're better to focus on one or two "core" social networks first. It's better to excel on a couple of social networks than be mediocre on five or six, and while social media is (mostly) free, your time is valuable. Indeed, depending on the type of business you run, not every social media site is going to suit your marketing, your audience, or what you are trying to achieve. To help you decide where to begin, identify which social networks your target audience already "hangs out" or use customer personas and research of social network demographics to judge where you will best be received. Joining Facebook and Twitter is often a given for brands simply due to their sheer

size and influence, but more "niche" communities with their own unique attributes - still with hundreds of millions of users, mind you - like Pinterest, Instagram, or LinkedIn, might be where you find can make an impact more successfully. You'll learn all about what each particular social network brings to the table as they are introduced in the chapters to come, but to start off, experiment with a couple of social networks where you can invest some significant time, track your progress, and then either build on your achievements with them, or steadily begin to experiment with other platforms on which you might have additional (or better) success.

**Define and assess your goals**

Before you start posting content to social media, it is useful to define the guiding themes and overall goals of your strategy, as these will help you shape the way you approach what may well become the linchpin in your marketing machine. I'm a fan of the SMART technique for creating actionable social media goals. Here's a breakdown, hopefully they'll help you too:

***S****pecific:* Be specific in what you want to achieve. Do you want to raise awareness of your brand? Increase sales? Improve customer service? Strengthen loyalty?
***M****easurable:* How will you know that your goal has been achieved? What analytics tools will you use to track your progress?
***A****chievable:* Is your goal realistic? When you are just starting off, don’t aim too high at the risk of being deflated if you don’t hit your projected goal; getting really adept at all this stuff (particularly if you are approaching social media marketing seriously for the first time) takes a while.
***R****elevant:* Is your goal aligned with your company's mission, vision and values?
***T****ime Specific:* When do you want to have achieved the goal by? To add a focus to your marketing, stick to one overarching goal at a time, e.g. *"I want to increase traffic to our website by 15% in the next 3 months"*.

For example, if you’re a shoe store owner and you normally sell 20 pairs of shoes a day, why not aim to use social media to help you sell 25 per day? After a good amount of time (at least a few months), evaluate where you are

by using analytics tools, social insights (likes, followers, comments), and other metrics to help you track and measure your activity - you'll find lots more information on these shortly.

**Perform an audit to help shape your content strategy**

Carrying out an audit is one of the best ways to get an idea of the kind of social media content strategy that will resonate with your audience, and a great way to decide upon what you want to post to your audience. Take time to identify your audience's needs, desires, and interests on social media - ask yourself what problems you can help them overcome, what questions you can answer, what type of content they prefer (e.g. text, photo, graphics, video), and when they are most likely to be around to see it. Tools like SEM Rush and TrueSocial Metrics are two popular paid options if you want to dig right down into the details, but you needn't spend a penny to get a good, general idea... especially if you use your competition to help you out! First, identify your competitors (you'll probably know them already, but a simple web search will tell you), then visit their websites and social media profiles for a nose around. Make notes on how often your rivals publish blogs and status updates on social media, and which content seems to perform best for them based on the number of likes, comments, and shares. You can gain further insight by identifying how much of this content appears to be original versus shared from other sources, and what the topics and tone of voice used are like. Use the information you gather to mirror successful types of content in your own social media strategy, but *also* to identify gaps and opportunities where you can do better.

**Note:** See the Premium Content Bundle chapter of this book to download a ready-made 24-question template to help your business plan and execute your social media strategy, and perform a simple competitor analysis.

**Plan ahead with a social media content calendar**

One of the stiffest tests facing brands on social media is to consistently publish high quality content for their fans. A company's social media presence that appears abandoned is the digital equivalent of turning your lights off. Because you're not updating online, people will assume that you're going out of business, even if the opposite is true. Since it's this consistency that can really help to boost levels of engagement (by enabling

fans to anticipate your next post) and foster a stronger relationship with your audience (who will keep coming back for more), one of the best ways to help get it right is by compiling a social media content calendar. An editorial calendar will allow you to plan your activity for weeks - or even months - in advance. This foresight will allow you to build seasonal themes into your updates, and prevent you from posting sub-par stuff just because you need to publish something. As well as planning for the big holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas, you will also be able to map out a strategy for “mini holidays” like July 4th or Valentine’s Day, occasions where fans are actively searching on social media for deals, discounts, advice, etc. The ability to scan a social content calendar regularly will also provide you with a way to step back from day-to-day posting and re-affirm your wider strategy. Of course, spontaneous posting to social media still has a place, but for the foundations of your strategy, a content calendar is highly recommended. One simple way to plan a content strategy (that can be used to populate your calendar and prevent yourself from becoming overwhelmed) is to create a daily theme across your social networks. For example: sharing a new blog post on Monday, asking a question on Tuesday, an infographic on Wednesday, a quote on Thursday, etc.

**Note:** Download my ready-to-use social media content calendar templates via the Premium Content Bundle chapter of this book.

### Re-purpose content across social media

It is worth emphasizing that something that might be distributed as one piece of content in the real world (a press release, say), can be marketed as four or five content pieces for social media: blog about it, tweet, make a video, share on Facebook, turn it into an infographic for Pinterest, etc. This is a fantastic strategy for making the most of your content creation, particularly if you are strapped for time or low on resources.

### Drop old-style communication methods and get social – find and define your social voice

Successful social media strategy requires just that - a *social* strategy. Traditional marketing techniques like TV and newspaper advertising

worked because the direction of communication could only go in one way (from brand to consumer) with little chance for reply, but social media means that this is no longer the case. Now that a two-way dialogue is firmly established and your brand is under the spotlight 24/7, you must resist the urge to talk *at* people, and adapt your tone of voice and communication methods to connect with them on a human level - speaking to them in a personable manner and listening with intent, rather than just hearing and doing nothing about it. This lesson applies the same whether you are a small business employing a handful of people, a multi-national company with thousands of staff, the owner of a "fun" business like a karaoke bar, or something more "serious" like a finance company. Brands that define their social voice (and strive to maintain it in all of their social interactions) can cut through the noise and deliver a clear message that, ultimately, will deliver more improved results. There *are* occasions where something like the old-school method of direct promotion is beneficial, but expect to spend the majority of your time being much more selfless, even going out of your way to make individual customers feel special as a way to generate a good feeling about your product or service that travels way beyond that one person.

**Humanize your brand and be emotive**

People use social media to connect with other *people*, so lower your barriers and show fans the real you, and the people behind your business' logo; be transparent, open, and authentic in all of your communication – authenticity often means being a little bit more open about what your business might traditionally share with customers, but there’s a fine line – if you’re consistently sharing posts about internal conflicts or your love life, that line has probably been crossed! establish your *unique* voice, show a sense of humor, use everyday language, etc. And if being genuine endears customers to you, then they will be more likely to want to engage with your content, share it on to others, *and* support you financially when the time comes to buy, by choosing you over another brand who they have no connection with. Rather than trying to manipulate fans into buying products or service, showcasing you and your brand's true values and personality will go a long way to setting you apart from your competitors.

While all of this advice applies to your text interactions and tone of voice, human, emotional connections are similarly important in visual content. Studies show that images of humans (as compared to inanimate objects) - especially those smiling and making eye contact with the viewer - can help to drive conversion rates. Even if the product you are selling isn't tangible, e.g. data or financial services, you should still try to incorporate people and human faces into at least some of your images, whether they be of you, your customers, or simply people in stock images. On a related note – and a powerful pairing to text alone – are emoticons. A study by Amex Open found that using emoticons in status updates increased comments by an average of 33%, while a separate investigation by Buddy Media discovered that posts with emoticons received on average 57% more likes, 33% more comments and 33% more shares. Perhaps more significant is that many social sites – Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook included - all support the use of Emoji – fully -drawn, expressive emoticons and ideograms that have fast become a universal language all of their own, can add a whole new layer of fun and expression to your status updates. In a 2015 report, Instagram found that nearly 50 percent of all captions and comments include at least one Emoji.

**Don't over-promote: build relationships and provide value**

The vast majority of social media users do not visit Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, et al. to be given the hard sell by companies; they use them to interact with family and friends, and to be entertained. If they do "like" or "follow" brands on social media, they often do so on a whim (think about the number you "like" or "follow"), and all but the most passionate fans won't care to see every single post you publish (in fact, it is unreasonable to think that you can even make it happen without spending a lot of money). Therefore, it is your job to convince people to enjoy having your business as something that is a big part of their everyday lives, and continue to earn your place - don't see it as a right, see it as a privilege. You do this by building trusting and loyal relationships, by being friendly, sharing great content, helping people with customer service issues (with the odd promotional post in between, of course... which if the rest of your strategy is up to scratch, your audience really shouldn't mind).

Ultimately, with social media content in mind, change your mindset from "what can we sell you?" to "what can we do to help you?", because in terms of choosing to follow a brand on social media, your fans will sure be asking the question "what's in it for me?" With competition up and organic (non-paid) reach (the number of people who see your content) at an all-time low, it is crucial that the content you post touches people on a personal and emotional level. Some of the most powerful emotional triggers are humor, awe, anger, and even narcissism (stuff that, by sharing, makes the individual look good in front on their peers on social media).

Once you get into your stride, one useful exercise to help you keep on track is as follows: from time to time, stop and take a look at your last 10 social media posts and ask yourself this question: *"What value am I providing and what purpose am I serving?"* If you cannot clearly define the answer to this question, you should think carefully about amending your strategy to better reach audiences who are now smarter and savvier than ever before; people who easily look past weak content or an over-sale-sy message. Just like in the real world, social media followers will resonate more with a brand that they can love and trust, much more than one whose sole purpose seems to be to encourage them to open their wallets at every opportunity. To reiterate the point I made above, you should strive to become a *seamless part* of their expected social media experience, not a jarring element that they want to skip past. All of this good work will build a positive image around your brand and slowly convert into sales.

**Consistently post high quality content**

First and foremost, don't launch a presence on a social media channel, post for a few weeks, and then let its activity dry up! For most social networks, one, two or three updates per day is a good target, but at a *minimum*, you should post at least a couple of times a week so that your content continues to appear in the news feeds of your most engaged fans. To single out Facebook as an example of a social network that a large majority of brands use, here's some wider perspective to explain why consistency is so important: When someone visits their Facebook News Feed, there are an average of 1,500 possible posts – generated according to the site's complicated algorithm - that they can be shown at any given time, from

friends, Pages, groups, events, etc. Add the fact that around half of users don't check Facebook every day (and, of those that do, they only browse for around 30-60 minutes in total), the chances of all of your posts being seen *and* engaged with in amongst all of that competition, falls considerably. In fact, without paid promotion (which we will look at later), Facebook makes it almost impossible for *all* of your fans to see *all* of your posts, and brands must now work harder than ever to eek as much free, organic reach out of their Facebook activity as possible. Facebook still offers businesses a *ton* of potential, but it is no longer as simple as it once was.

In addition to the above, in order to make sure that as many people as possible encounter the content you post (whether on the social network it was originally posted or if shared elsewhere), it must be top quality, i.e. the kind of entertaining, helpful, inspirational, *valuable* stuff that people will like, comment, click (if a link is included) and share. In fact, in August 2013 - in an attempt to filter News Feeds to display only "high quality" content from brands - Facebook surveyed thousands of users on what they deemed as "high quality" content, folded the responses into its machine learning system and integrated it all with a master algorithm. This algorithm considers "over a thousand different factors," including the quality of a business Page's other content and the level of completion of its profile when determining whether a post is "high quality" enough to be broadcast in the News Feed to its fullest potential. Most people and businesses have a handful of "go-to" sources, either in their favorites or subconscious – websites and social profiles that they routinely share from (you probably have your own, in fact). This selection promises them consistently valuable content they can share with their friends and fans, and your aim should be to become one of these trusted sources.

The bottom line is that the more consistently engaged a customer is with your posts on social media content - liking, commenting, sharing - the more likely they are to continue to do so in future. And in the case of Facebook, positive interaction like this will ensure that your posts are to continue to appear in their News Feed for future engagement opportunities. To refer to Facebook one more time, its News Feed Algorithm filters content into individuals' feeds according to what it thinks is most relevant to them, so if

a fan never sees posts from you (because you are inactive), ignores your posts for a prolonged period of time because they are not engaging enough (or, worse, has used the option to hide them), they will disappear from that person's News Feed and you may find it difficult to get them back in there without paying for the privilege.

**Note:** With organic reach on Facebook and other social networks at an all-time low, it might seem that the best solution to gain exposure for your content is to post *incredibly frequently*. However, in some ways this approach is actually counter-intuitive. Not even your most passionate fans will enjoy being constantly flooded by posts from you, and by decreasing the pressure of needing to produce a rapid stream of top quality content day in, day out, you leave more time to make sure that what you *do* publish is as good as it can be - stuff that will garner the most engagement from fans. In addition, if you substitute the time spent on "excess" content for supporting "core" content with a few advertising dollars, you increase the number of unique fans who see these posts and - if they engage with a like, comment, or share - they're more likely (in the case of Facebook at least) to feed the next one organically in the News Feed.

**Which types of posts get the most engagement?**

One of the great debates amongst social media marketers is whether text, image, video, links, or other post types are the most effective in reaching fans and encouraging them to interact. The truth is that nobody can tell you for certain - social networks are forever tweaking their algorithms, forcing brands to play catch-up - and at the end of the day, it very much depends on what your individual data reveals to you is working best. For example, back in 2012 Facebook was telling businesses that posts that include a photo album, picture or video generate about 180%, 120% and 100% more engagement respectively than text posts alone, but what use is that potential for engagement if you notice that *your text posts* at any given point in time happen to reach 5x the amount of people than when you use images? And in January 2014, Facebook said that link-share posts (those that generate an automatic image thumbnail when a news article or website address is shared within a status update) should be favored because *"when people see more text status updates on Facebook they write more status updates*

*themselves."* My advice is to resist the temptation to blindly follow trends, fads, or "no guarantee" tricks that promise to deliver high levels of engagement! Instead, use them as a guide but always focus on providing awesome, valuable content first. Continue to test and tweak with a close eye on your *own* stats, and keep adapting to push on with what is working best *for you* (not everybody else) at any given time.

**Don't get hung up on reach; focus on creating loyal, passionate fans and meaningful relationships**

As you now understand, fierce competition between individuals, brands *and* the way social networks' algorithms work, means that not all of your fans will see your posts in their news feeds when you publish them, and by their own admission, sites like Facebook admit that this situation is only going to get tougher as more and more brands enter the fray. Therefore, you need to think less about chasing "likes", follower numbers, and post reach - as these metrics (although having some influence and merit, especially if they are from and reaching a target, high quality audience) can often be arbitrary. Instead, concentrate more on producing great content that will grow you a loyal following of people who love what you do (showing it via post likes, comments, sharing your content, and eventually through sales), therein encouraging *more* people to invest in your cause. **This goes not just for Facebook, but all social media.** I'd say if you're getting anywhere near 10% reach to all of your fans without paid promotion, you're doing *extremely* well.

**Provide great customer service, handle complaints right**

Unlike in times gone by, social media gives your company instant and effective exposure to your customers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Customers also have similar access to *you*, and this is no more apparent than in what can only be described as a revolution in customer service. What's more, as well as making your customers feel good, answering complaints provides a useful insight into your target audience's personality, what your business is doing well, and what it could improve on. With the instantaneousness of a Facebook post or a tweet, people's expectations for a swift and effective response to their queries or problems is higher than ever. Many social media experts will advise you to *always* reply within an

arbitrary time limit of something like 30 minutes. If you employ a dedicated social media community manager, this may be possible, but for the vast majority of businesses, it just isn't a realistic target. I'd still recommend that you deal with customer service issues as soon as possible after they arise, but suggest that a response time of anything up to 24 hours (on weekends, too, if you can manage it) is acceptable to most people; and instead of constantly monitoring for problems, simply assign a few dedicated batches of time in a day to respond to customers and handle issues. Using the “About” sections of your social profiles to tell people when you will be available to help and how long they can expect to wait for a reply, is a sound strategy to set expectations and prevent customer frustration.

Of course, the best way to avoid customer service issues being played out publicly on social media is to prevent them from happening. To facilitate this, give people several options to solve problems themselves, and for making contact - online FAQs, email, telephone, private message, and place them where people will see them easily, like in your main bio or about section. The simpler it is to contact you, the more likely a customer is to try that first to help resolve a problem, rather than spouting off angrily at you online. In addition, demonstrate your willingness to accept that problems do sometimes occur by using your social media profiles as a way to announce less-than-positive news about product or services issues. There will always be *some* fans who are upset when they read it, but they’d be a lot more aggrieved if they had discovered the issue on their own. If someone does post their angry grievances in public about you on social media, two of the most important pointers to remember when approaching such a situation are as follows:

*Don't ignore it:* The longer you leave a customer complaint to sit and fester, the angrier said customer will be, and by refusing to reply to negative feedback, it looks to *everyone* like you are unwilling to deal with problems, and simply hoping that ignoring them will make them go away. Look to respond as quickly as possible, as most customers expect a swift response.

*Don't delete it:* Just as bad (if not worse) than ignoring negative feedback is to delete a post submitted on your profile. When the customer who

complained notices that their comment has been deleted, they will only be *even more* upset, and other fans who see what you have done (especially if the original criticism was screen-grabbed for evidence) will think ill of you, too.

In short, always respond to complaints on social media in a professional and courteous manner, and in a time frame that matches the resources of your business. Be ready to acknowledge the customer's feedback (even if you don't think you were in the wrong, as going off on the defensive is a very bad tactic, too), and willing to admit your mistakes. We're all human - customers realize this and will respect you a whole lot more for being open and honest about any errors, than simply trying to sweep issues under the carpet. To sweeten instances like this, explain how you will work to fix or improve things if necessary, ask for input from your fans if the situation calls for it, and send a follow-up note a couple of days after the issue has been resolved as a way to make sure everything is still okay *and* to reaffirm a social connection between the customer and your company. Occasionally, consider going above and beyond the call of duty to remedy a customer's problem - in public - in order to harness a wave of respect and good karma. When a Citibike customer in New York City fell off one of its bicycles and ripped his jeans, instead of just apologizing, Citibike delivered the gentleman a voucher to buy a new pair of pants. Surprised and overjoyed, the customer shared the news (and a photo to prove it) on Twitter, to all of his followers.

**Note:** For a much more comprehensive guide to building and maintaining a robust social media customer service strategy (tons more information – way too much to fit here!), check out my book *Successful Social Media Customer Service*, available on Amazon.

**Automation doesn't have to be a dirty word**

With so much work involved growing and maintaining a strong social media marketing strategy over a variety of channels, automation will allow you to save time, stay flexible, and plan your social media strategy down to the minute. Tools like Buffer (http://www.bufferapp.com) or Post Planner

(http://www.postplanner.com) allow you to manage multiple social media accounts from a single dashboard (allowing you to upload in bulk for the week's upcoming post, publishing content when you are asleep but your audience is not, or when you are on vacation, etc.). In fact, automation tools can help to successfully build a long-tail social media strategy by scheduling new and "evergreen" blog posts for repeat exposure, i.e. sharing the same great content multiple times across several social networks, over a set period of time. This will allow you more of your existing audience the chance to catch your great content *and* allow new followers to find it if they missed it first time around. Pay close attention to the frequency that you automate such posts. It may be fine to post a blog post link to Twitter a couple of times in one day (where the flow of information is incredibly quick and dense), but for sites like Facebook and LinkedIn, a bigger delay between each share would be more apt. On that note, when you *do* prepare to share the same link multiple times, you're best off re-styling it to make each share as unique and engaging as you can. Check out the Blogging Tips section for more information about using this technique.

**Note:** On the topic of scheduling and automation, here's a nifty strategy for scheduling posts that you might not have thought of: schedule posts to publish *just before or after the hour* (rather than right on the dot) as a way to catch people who are checking social media at the start of their day, lunch break, after work, between meetings, etc.

In spite of all of the help that automation tools provide, remember that building strong personal relationships with genuine one-to-one interaction should remain at the core of your work, and you certainly can't automate that (i.e. automating replies to comments on your profiles is a bad idea!).

**Social media sucks up time**

Social media is now an essential marketing and PR tool, and should be taken seriously. If you ask an existing employee to take over responsibility for your social media output, do not expect them to be able to do it as well as their current job. If you're going the whole hog, expect it to take up *at least* 12-15 hours a week to plan, create, and schedule content, measure

results, as well as engaging with customers. Consider employing somebody into the role of Social Media Manager full time. Alternatively, outsource your activity to a local specialist marketing firm, experts who can help you hit the ground running. If you do, ensure that they understand your brand, marketing goals, and speak your customer's language.

**Draw up a social media policy, make employees ambassadors**
A clear, company-wide social media policy will clarify the concerns of staff mentions of your brand on social media and empower them to positively support your brand, helping to make you a more socially active business. To prepare the information you need, consult with the key influencers in your business, adhere to state and federal laws, gather feedback from your employees, and outline guidelines about use of social media (whether mentioning your brand or not), both inside and outside business hours. Try to summarize the most important points in a document no longer than one or two pages (otherwise it might not be read and leave you open to issues in the future), and highlight the benefits that responsible use of social media can bring to the company as a whole. Employees need to feel confident about social sharing guidelines to be good brand ambassadors, so make writing company-related statuses easy by - for example - inventing a hashtag related to life at your business, and encourage them to take pictures and share updates using it. The person in charge of social media content, of course, should know the policy inside out.

**Social media marketing isn't free; experiment with paid ads**
Several years ago, social media marketing was seen as a golden opportunity to reach and promote to customers for free. In certain aspects, this was true. Now, however, with greater competition and a more astute audience, paid promotion across is all-but essential. That's not to say you can't still achieve brilliant results without spending a penny, but even a nominal figure, spent well (such as $5 per day on highly targeted Facebook ads), can noticeably compound a brand's success. The key to a lot of successful social media advertising are promotions that blend into a user's experience of the site or app on which they appear, mirroring the tone and publishing style of the audience - as with non-paid content, think seamless instead of disruptive.

**Reconsider return on investment (ROI) metrics**

Social media return on investment is not like traditional marketing - in many ways, you may not always want to focus solely on monetary return within a fixed period. Consider metrics such as brand awareness, word-of-mouth promotion, traffic driven to your website via social media, and strengthening loyalty and engagement with existing customers. These can all be just as valuable in the long run - leading to plenty of sales over a longer period of time, rather than a short-term gain that dies off quickly.

**Measuring performance with Google Analytics and other tools**

Understanding the performance of your social media marketing is key to being able to succeed in the long run. One of the most cost-effective ways (read: free) to monitor social media conversions is through Google Analytics. Two of the most valuable reports for social media marketers feature under the “Social” section of the site: Network Referrals shows the data on social media traffic referrals to your website from social networks, and Landing Pages will show you which of your website pages are shared most often on social media. You can also use Google Analytics to setup and monitor goals, like completed sales, enquiries, and engagement. One of the simplest goals to setup is URL Destination - Google Analytics will mark a goal as met when a visitor lands on a particular page on your website, e.g. a "Thank you for your purchase" page.

Other useful tools for measuring the performance of your social strategy include social networks’ native tools (Facebook Insights, Twitter and Pinterest Analytics, etc.) Bit.ly (to measure click-through rates on specified links), and Social Mention (to track mentions of your business name, competitor names, etc. In essence, use analytics tools to set goals, see where your social media strategy is working best, and work out how your customers are finding you so that you can fine tune and optimize your efforts going forward. It is unlikely that you will nail your social media strategy on the first attempt, so evaluate your progress often and don't be afraid to test the water with new ideas, tweak old ones and repeat what works for you.

**Note:** For an elegantly simple way to monitor the growth of your social media profiles, download my Social Media Progress Tracker spreadsheet. For more details, check out the *Premium Content Bundle* chapter of this book.

**Slow and steady wins the race; be patient and ignore scams**

Social media success does not happen overnight. Just like in real life, friendships and bonds between you and your audience can take a long time to build, and some people just take longer to warm to you and convert into paying customers than others. Sometimes the metrics that don't pay off instantly (increasing brand awareness and customer retention, or improving customer service) are the ones that will have the greatest impact on conversions later on down the line. I have seen *so* many instances of businesses diving into social media marketing with gusto, only to give up shortly afterwards because they did not have 1.3 billion Facebook fans and a ton of sales after their first week of posting ten times a day (okay, that’s an exaggeration but you understand what I mean!). If you're not serious about working at social media for not just weeks or months, but years, you are already setting yourself up for failure.

On a related noted, ignore 'get followers fast' scams. It might be tempting to use services offered all over the web to rack up fans and followers quickly, but you'll only end up with hundreds of random strangers - or bot accounts - who don't care about you or your business.  50 interested, engaged, and loyal followers are insurmountably better than 5,000 who are not. The only real “secret” to growing an audience on social media is to be consistent and patient in your efforts.

**Above all, enjoy the ride; build strong, *meaningful* relationships**

The stronger someone acquaints with your brand on social media, the more likely they’ll remember you and pass the positive word on to their friends and family. Be consistent, present, real and genuine in all of your communication if you want to foster genuine interaction with customers on a slow and steady path to creating loyalty, sales and brand advocates for life.

# Explained: The Best Types of Content to Post on Social Media

With the foundations of social media marketing covered, let's get down to the nitty-gritty: social media content. In this chapter, we'll look at a variety of proven posting strategies to help your social media strategy thrive. The following content strategies are generalized in a way that applies to the majority of social networks covered in this book. You'll find more *specific* advice about how to maximize its impact for each platform within each network's individual chapter.

**Note:** What follows are some of the most popular content strategies for social media. If you'd like *tons* more ideas demonstrated alongside real life examples, check out my list of *101 Social Media Content Ideas for Business* at http://www.socialmediacontentideas.com.

**Ask questions and start discussions**

Get to know your fans and give them a chance to get to know you by posing questions and starting discussions. These questions can be about a product or event related to your business, a quick trivia quiz, or just about the wider world. The types of questions that work best include those about preference *("Do you prefer product A or product B?")*, Yes or No *(Are you a fan of X?")*, those that ask for opinions *("What's your favorite flavor of ice-cream in our range?")*, or ones that politely challenge, *("Opening our second Canadian store this month - guess where?").* Even just ending a status update with “do you agree?” or “what do you think?” is enough to encourage people to get involved. The simplest question can be useful in achieving impressive levels of engagement (and consumer insight!) provided that the subject captures the attention of your audience, particularly if it takes little or no effort to respond. As well as a simple text post, this strategy can be combined with (or implemented within) a powerful image - keep reading for more information. Interestingly, *where* you ask the question in a status update also affects engagement rates.

Posing a question at the end of a post - compared to somewhere in the middle where it can easily get ignored - can increase engagement by up to 15%, according to a study by Buddy Media.

**Note:** Similar to the above – and also commonly used – are 'fill in the blank' posts as a way to encourage engagement. They're successful because fans will only have to type one or two words at the most to respond e.g. *"If you could live anywhere in the world, it would be _______."*

**Tell your story and feature the stories of your customers**
Every brand and individual has a story to tell, whether through text or (often better) through visuals; we're hard-wired to react and respond to a compelling tale. Use social media as a destination where fans can get to know you and your brand much better than they can simply through viewing the products or services that you sell; make it a place where your voice, personality, and authenticity can shine through. Interesting and engaging topics of conversation to cover include why you launched your company, your achievements (and failures, and what you learnt from them), what motivates you, and the people and events that inspire you. In essence, show customers that you share their thoughts and ideals, and become a brand that they want to emotionally invest in, which will eventually lead to loyalty and sales. In addition to your own stories, your customers or clients will always have fun and interesting stories about how you and your product or service fit into their lives (and often it's going to be more interesting than content you could come up with yourself), so encourage them to share their tales with you (through text, photos, and videos), so that you can feature them as part of your content strategy. Doing so will excite and please the customers in question, encourage them to spread the love about your brand, help to build a stronger community around your product or service, and also act as strong social proof to others about how your brand positively impacts people's lives.

**Dig into problems you solve, share your expertise, and be valuable**
One of the most effective ways to influence social media users into connecting with you on a social and emotional level is to position your brand as an authority - a source that they can trust and respect, and with

whom they can rely on for the information or experience they desire. One of the best ways to do this is to dig into the problems you solve and demonstrate your expertise. By this, I don't mean you should start boasting about how good your product is at solving "Problem X" at every opportunity; instead, be a valuable beacon of information within your field or industry. For instance, if your company sells antique furniture polish, you might publish posts to explain why it is so important to keep aged items in good condition, share recent example and statistics about antiques that have sold for high prices due to their pristine preservation, and provide hints and tips about best how to treat different kinds of wood. Great content – whether single posts or links to a blog article – will also be shared, further increasing brand awareness.

**Use breaking news, holidays, and special events to inspire content ideas**

If you are able to weave hot, newsworthy topics into your social media posts, it can add a relevance and credibility to your output that will endear you to fans by showing you as a brand that is at the forefront of new trends within your industry (*and* in the case of Facebook, its algorithm works to show timely, trending stories near to the top of the News Feed, possibly leading to higher engagement). Use tools like Google Alerts (http://www.google.com/alerts) and Feedly (http://feedly.com/) to be notified of breaking stories when they happen, or sites like BuzzSumo (http://www.buzzsumo.com) to hunt down trending tweets and topics related to almost any subject. The cookie company Oreo is an expert at using this tactic. For example, at the end of 2013, it posted a short video clip accompanied by the text *"We're officially counting down to the last dunk of the year,"* and to celebrate the USA's Mars Rover robot successfully landing on the Red Planet, it posted a photo of an Oreo cookie with a red-cream center imprinted with robot tracks, and paired it with the caption *"Now, to perfectly land an Oreo cookie in milk."* In addition, some of the most viral posts on social media are linked to one-off dates or celebrations throughout the year. Holidays like Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Halloween, or special days like St. Patrick's Day, the night of the Oscars, etc. are feel-good occasions and easy to create content for, e.g. wishing your fans a happy time, sharing a fun fact, asking a

holiday-related question, e.g. *"How many Easter bunnies can you see in this photo?"*, or suggesting how your product or service can best be utilized at the particular time of year. Beyond that, there are even more "niche" occasions that might resonate with your fans and will display your brand's relevance: things like the release day of a big movie, International Talk Like A Pirate Day, Movember, or International Coffee Day. Mark all of the most relevant dates in your calendar, and prepare content ahead of time in order to "celebrate" them with your audience.

**Note:** When you *do* use the above strategies, it is important to do so in the right manner, and with appropriate tact. Avoid hijacking popular cultural events for the sake of it (especially if you cannot make the associated content relevant to your business), and try to do it in a way that doesn't come across as blatantly opportunistic. Spagettio's learnt this lesson the hard way (via a tirade of negative feedback) after it once commemorated the anniversary Pearl Harbor with an image of a spaghetti hoop holding the flag of the United States.

**Promote products and services (adopt the 80 / 20 rule)**
Although the majority of your social media marketing content should not be overtly promotional, selling your product or service is ultimately what you're there for, and customers do realize that. Assuming that your brand-to-customer relationship is good and the rest of the social media content you post is valuable, they will tolerate the odd post to tell them about a new product or service, or a sale or offer that you are starting - heck, they might even appreciate you letting them know! An easy way to balance out your social media output in a way that will keep you on the good side of your customers, and one a lot of brands already use, is the 80/20 rule. It states that you should post non-promotional content 80% of the time (your own valuable, helpful, or personable stuff, or related content linking to another source, with the sole aim of driving engagement), and reserve the other 20% for being more promotional. Even within this 20%, there is a broad spectrum of approaches, from subtle to more overt selling, depending on how you believe your audience will react.

**Note:** Where sales and offers are concerned, one approach to keep customers on side is to make certain promotions exclusive to people loyal enough to follow you on social media; e.g. extra 5% off for quoting a code posted on your Facebook Page, or a surprise flash sale for people who spot a tweet from you. Another involves giving fans early access to new products or services, preceded by a campaign of posts that build awareness and make people feel a sense that they are getting something special and exclusive. These messages can either be hosted exclusively on a social media channel, *or* can be used to push people to your website where you have more freedom to present your brand and offerings, collect e-mail addresses and visitor data, give away coupons, etc. in any way that you like.

**Make effective use of visuals – both images and videos - to drive engagement**

Images are *the* most popular type of content shared by social media users, so it stands to reason that you should give them a lot of attention in your own content strategy - and where brands are concerned, there are real benefits in creating unique visual posts. Research shows that social media images are much more likely to be associated with positive emotions than text posts, and brand promotion via images is much more accepted than if by text (done right, they don't really look like ads, slotting seamlessly into people's news feeds). Online tools (mentions of which are dotted throughout this book) now make the creation of beautiful visual content easier than ever. If you wanted to, you could crank out dozens of visuals per day. With this in mind, try not to fall into the trap of creating snazzy visuals for the sake of it, or at the detriment to your central marketing message. Study the performance of your images performance to spot which ones trigger a response in your fans, and which ones do not. When you find what works, replicate and scale it. Remember, too, that good written content that spells out your value proposition, compels fans to act, and builds a dialogue between you and your customers, (when accompanying an image, on its own, or in reply to comments) remains crucially important. Make sure your marketing and sales strategy defines how and when visuals will be used, and that they complement your brand while upholding the quality of your product or service.

**Note:** Video content is now a *huge* part of the social media mix too, and many of the following strategies can very easily be adapted to work in video form for multiple channels including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and of course, YouTube. Where applicable, the following chapters will include *specific* advice on maximizing the impact of video for the social network in question. In the past, the focus on social video was mostly about achieving viral success. However, virality doesn't do much for your brand in the long term. Instead, the key is to make your native videos as valuable and shareable as possible - posting consistently great content reflecting the ideas below and throughout this book. While digesting the following information, I would strongly recommend that you consider the possibility of how it might fit into the "motion picture" side of your marketing.

*Where to find images to post on social media*
Physically shooting photos or building your own original graphical images is always the best option for visual content on social media, but time and budget constraints make this impossible for most brands to execute one hundred percent of the time. Luckily, there are a ton of online tools to find and edit photos and graphics, either completely free or for a small fee. Where free photos are concerned, some of my favorite sources for free images include Comp Fight (http://www.compfight.com) and freeimages (http://www.freeimages.com). For reasonably priced stock images, Yay Micro (http://www.yaymicro.com) is my go-to destination. Be careful when choosing stock images – avoid cheesiness and cliché at all costs; go for natural, visceral shots. As for graphics, freepik (http://www.freepik.com) is my first port of call to look for free stuff. If I can't find what I like, Vectorstock (http://www.vectorstock.com) is my preferred site. With all of the above - whether an image is free or paid for - always read and understand the terms of using an image, e.g. whether accreditation is required, if it can be used for commercial purposes, etc.

**Note:** Each social network has its own specific best practices for image sizes, but the general rule of thumb for any visual content is bigger is always better. The social networks will automatically resize your images as needed: there is no quality loss when the image is scaled down, but there

will most certainly be if an image needs to be blown up. For simplicity's sake, sticking to the following measurements should cover you for nearly all of your visual needs: 1280 x 720 pixels for landscape images, 735 x 1102 pixels for portrait images, and 900 × 900 pixels for square images. In addition, it's useful to name your image files thoughtfully for SEO (search engine optimization): include keywords separated by hyphens or underscores, and alt tags to sit in place of your image when an error prevents it from loading, or it is being interpreted by someone who is visually impaired.

*Brand your images (but sometimes choose not to)*
In order to help your fans learn to instinctively recognize your visual content when it appears in their news feeds or is "stolen" from the social network you originally posted to, it is critical to brand your images effectively. This can be achieved in one or more ways combined, such as adding a logo (create guidelines addressing size and placement for neatness), website URL or Twitter handle, and using a consistent color palette, photo filter, and fonts to reflect your brand personality. The colors, filters and fonts used in your images will strongly affect how people perceive your brand on social media, so choose them with care, considering what kinds of feelings you want each piece of content to evoke, e.g. bright and cheery, serious, nostalgic, etc. For efficiency's sake (and to compound a sense of familiarity over time) you may even want to create a uniform template for certain types of visual content, e.g. promotions, industry insights, milestones.

**Note:** In most cases, a subtle approach to branding works best; your image - not your brand - should take center stage, and sometimes no text overlay or filter is needed. This is particularly pertinent for content created to mark occasions with emotional or historical significance, e.g. Mother's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Memorial Day, etc., where foregoing all branding might actually work in your favor for two reasons: slapping your logo on such content just doesn't seem right, and people may be encouraged to share high quality, original, "brandless" images because they feel more ownership over them - the visual content is suddenly much more selfless, or more about the fan and their connections than it is your brand. Although there is a

higher chance that the images in question might be stolen and used without attribution, if those images *do* get more shares on the social profile you originally published them to as a result of having no branding, some sort of built-in attribution should remain each time they are passed along, e.g. a Facebook link to your business' Page or a "retweeted by" link on Twitter.

*Make images powerful and self-explanatory*
The best images to use on social media are ones that catch the eye, inspire curiosity, entertain, spur emotion, or broadcast a gripping message. It doesn't really matter if the image shows an experience related to your brand or not; the important thing is to help reinforce the kinds of emotions you want customers to associate with your company. Research by Buffer found that self-explanatory, stand-alone images perform better than those that need explanation and clarification in the accompanying description. In essence, if your image needs a caption to make any sense at all (rather than to elaborate and provide more value), it might not be as effective as you want it to be.

*Share a special offer, discount code, or upcoming event*
People *love* special offers, and images are a great way to highlight them in a bold and imaginative way - whether it's the launch of a season-long promotion, a one-off event, or a week where each day brings a new deal (a great way to encourage people to visit your social profiles multiple times). Compound an image's impact with accompanying text that includes a link for fans to access the offer/get more information, a time limit that will add a sense of urgency, and a call to action that will drive click-throughs. Where upcoming events, products and services are concerned, make a point of regularly highlighting these moments on social channels, and to continually differentiate yourself from the competition. Where relevant, make a point of accompanying such images with words like "new" and "limited time only" to convey your brand as fresh and forward-thinking, and to pique the curiosity of your customers.

**Note:** As an extra way to drive engagement, design an image that tells fans that they'll gain access to a secret sale, discount code, etc. if said image receives a certain amount shares. Set a realistic target based on your

existing audience and predicted reach, because you *do really* want to hit it and reward those who were interested.

*Show customers enjoying your products and services*
There is no greater form of social proof than customers showing others how much they are enjoying your product or service, and doing it with an image is extremely powerful way of converting people into customers because it helps people associate positive emotions with your brand, whether the photo is snapped by you or - even better - user-submitted. Smartphones make it extremely easy for people to snap and share experiences with your brand as they happen, so encourage your customers and fans to do just that when they are at your premises (with signs or purpose-made "group photo/selfie spots" with an interesting background, for example.), out and about, or at home (e.g. "Post a photo in the comments to show us the view you see while listening to our podcast"). Actively encourage customers to tag or mention your profile in updates containing photos, so that when you are notified you can easily save and share the user-generated image on your brand's profile page (giving credit, of course, but also making the person feel special and keen to show their moment in the spotlight to their friends). Unify these types of posts with a hashtag that you can track across all platforms to hunt down more customer-generated content, and even add a subtle link to the product or service in question, if you think your audience won't mind. If you have lots of photos to show off in one go, take a look at using the Flipagram app (http://flipagram.com/) as a way to showcase them on your profile in a fun, animated, and engaging fashion. For an additional layer of persuasion, you could experiment with adding a short customer testimonial in the form of a text overlay on top of an image of a happy customer, both to spread cheer about your brand and help convert others into willing buyers.

**Note:** As a quick and powerful aside to your social media efforts, include customer images on the product pages of your website for top notch social proof. Include instructions with your product (on the packaging, confirmation email, etc.) to let customers know how to tag you on

Facebook, Instagram, etc., then use a website plugin to have the images automatically appear on your site.

*Show off product features in images or infographics*
People viewing and buying products online don't have the ability to examine them as they would in real life, so high quality product images with added details (or a link to where they can be found) are extremely important to social media marketing. Add annotations to an image of a product or service to show off features that might not be immediately obvious, e.g. the special type of fabric used in a garment, how efficient your delivery times are, or the wondrous technology hidden inside a gadget. Infographics also work well to display lots of information - especially numbers and other data related to your brand, often based on a seasonal theme - in an eye-catching, engaging and shareable way. If graphic design isn't your bag, sites like Pictochart (http://www.piktochart.com) and Easel.ly (http://www.easel.ly) will help you to create lovely-looking infographics in a simple, drag-and-drop manner.

**Note:** While infographics render well in Twitter and Pinterest feeds, do *not* upload and post a full infographic image to Facebook because it will be shrunk, squashed and be almost impossible to read. Instead, select a square portion of the infographic (either the top section where the title is or from its most interesting point), cut it out, and post *this* to Facebook along with a link and a call to action to encourage people to click through to your website, Pinterest profile, etc. to view the infographic in full.

*Share inspirational, motivational and nostalgic images, and blog post quotes*
Two types of image posts that often perform well on all social media are inspirational and motivational quotes. As well as their tendency to stir a deep emotional response, they are also highly shareable, so target your quotes to relate to the mindset of your customer. Nostalgic photos with a text overlay work similarly in the way that they strike a chord of a shared experience within us, often from our childhood. Subjects for these might include historic images of your target audience's city or neighborhood, or

dusty old snaps that relay the heritage of your brand. And of course, everyone on social media loves a funny image - uplifting and shareable. The following are some very broad guidelines for creating strong examples of each type of image. With repetition and consistency, your fans will learn to tie the emotions they feel when viewing these images of your brand, product or service:

*Motivational images:* items or landscapes that inspire optimism and positivity; strong sans serif fonts that capture attention and reinforce authority (capitalize words to create emphasis); bright and vivid filters to compound impact of your words. Often, the best kind of inspirational content arrives in the form of case studies, customer testimonials and stories of your own failures and challenges.

*Nostalgic images:* Choose a retro, relatable, interesting snap of your company, your community, etc., ideally several years old; hand-written, narrow fonts are wistful and memory-laden; match your filter to the occasion or season, e.g. bright and over-exposed for summer. Tie nostalgic images to a popular hashtag like #tbt (Throwback Thursday) to add some extra clout and shareability.

*Funny images:* Images that are created to entertain don't have to be directly related to your products or services, but should appeal to your target audience in order to be successful. Match the font type to the tone of the humor, e.g. serif for playful, sans serif for dry; use warm tones and filters. Highly shareable, they can work by transforming your company into a relatable, more personable entity.

**Note:** A similar strategy to the above involves lifting a choice statistic or quote from a blog post and converting it into a powerful image that will motivate your readers to click over to read the article in full. Graphics and text overlays can be quickly and easily created in programs like Photoshop, PowerPoint or Keynote, *or* through online tools like PicMonkey (http://www.picmonkey.com) and Canva (http://www.canva.com), *or* apps like A Beautiful Mess and Phonto (both available for iOS and Android devices).

*Share hints, tips, and tutorials*
Offering hints and tips to your customers is a great way to be consistently valuable, increase the potential virality of your posts, and to grow brand loyalty. One of the easiest ways to do this is to show simple step-by-step instructions by composing a single photo split into several frames (the Instagram-built Layout app, websites like Fotor (http://www.fotor.com) and Canva both offer free collage-making tools, while mobile apps like PicFrame and Diptic will help you to achieve a similar effect on iOS and Android devices). To take one example, Petsmart uses a single Instagram image split into multiple images to give simple pet training advice, like teaching a dog to sit and lay. The photo's visual instructions are complemented by further explanation in the text caption.

*Show behind the scenes*
To increase intimacy with your brand, show your human side, and make customers feel that they are getting a special sneak peek at the inner workings of your company, use photos to snap photos of behind-the-scenes goings-on – either vague, but exciting teasers *or* documenting each stage of a project as you go along; showing fans your work in progress. For example, Tiffany & Co. once snapped a photo of an artist they had employed, right in the middle of him painting a new backdrop for its new Fifth Avenue store. Other examples might be as simple as showing off the treats bought for the office to celebrate the end of the working week, taking a snap of a special visitor, or posting a photo to welcome your newest member of staff.

*Highlight your charitable side*
To help enhance your brand image, stand out as a brand that cares, use images to highlight your charitable side. Levis regularly promotes the good its company does, such as posting a photo of a t-shirt printed for the free day it gives all employees so that they can help projects in their local communities. Get your fans involved in the process, too. For example, you could create a poll ("Poll" or "Offerpop" are two handy Facebook apps for

this purpose), and ask your audience to vote on the charity or cause that they want to see you support.

*Share popular memes, adapt them to your audience*

Memes (most often humorously-captioned images grouped into categories such "Bad Luck Brian," "First World Problems" and many, many others) are hugely shareable and extremely popular on Facebook, and all social media. If you're unfamiliar with memes (I'm sure you'll have seen one even if you didn't recognize the image as one), the best thing is to visit a site like http://www.memegenerator.net to discover examples for use on your Page, or to create your own - you'll pick up the idea in no time. Humorous and cute memes and images also do well on social media - anything that will evoke an emotional reaction, particularly if it is a positive one. The "Funny", "Aww" and "Pics" subreddits of Reddit.com (http://www.reddit.com/r/funny, http://www.reddit.com/r/aww and http://www.reddit.com/r/pics respectively) are an almost-infinite source of such content, but if you have your own original funny, cute, or interesting images, all the better. The unstoppable spread of many memes and funny images means that crediting the original source can be an almost impossible task, but it's always good to do so if you can. Despite the widespread popularity of memes and other viral images, do not rely on them heavily as a way to bulk out your social marketing strategy. Regardless of the high engagement rates they might get, this type of content can be regarded as not "high quality," (especially in the eyes of Facebook, as often the engagement it *does* get is not the most highbrow) so too much of it could hinder your reputation and reach more than it helps, but used once in a while, they shouldn't do any harm.

*Jump on fads in popular culture*

Just as the popularity of a meme comes and goes, so do real-life photo trends. Photobombing and selfies are trends that look like they are here to stay, but others like whaling and owling burnt out as quickly as they arrived. Nevertheless, all of these trends can be taken advantage of in order to boost engagement in your own content strategy, whether you take the photos yourself or encourage your fans to, so that you can share their efforts on your social profiles. For example, Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary in

Australia encourages visitors to take selfies with some of the animals within the park, which it then features on its Facebook and Instagram profiles.

*Build Presentations for Slideshare*
With over 60 million visitors a month, Slideshare (http://www.slideshare.net) is the web's biggest hub for hosting and sharing presentations on almost any topic. Some of the most popular slideshows are business-related, which makes the site doubly important for B2B companies. The site's visual nature makes it one of the most efficient platforms for which to create or re-purpose work in order to generate high quality leads (paid membership even allows you to place contact forms within the presentation itself). The most successful Slideshare presentations are laser-focused in their subject, turning individual aspects of written content (blogs, e-books, speeches, and even infographics) into highly visual content, i.e. strong and emotive photos or graphics, a consistent color scheme and fonts, and keeping text to an absolute minimum - often just a single sentence (or even half of one!) per slide. Check out the Explore and Popular pages on Slideshare for examples of featured content, and mirror this style in your own uploads. Slideshare decks can be created, saved, and uploaded via software like PowerPoint and Keynote, online tools like Canva or Haiku Deck (https://www.haikudeck.com/), or apps like SlideIdea (http://slideidea.com/) Once published, Slideshare presentations can be shared onwards to Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and more, *and* embedded into websites.

*Other image types: word clouds, screenshots, and snack size data*
Word clouds are a fun and inventive way to represent a piece of content when sharing it to social media, whether that be the words from a blog post, the transcript of a video, or the opinions of people commenting on a particular status update. Sites like Wordle (http://www.wordle.net/) ask you to paste in a body of text, which it will then use to generate a word cloud - customizable by font, layout, and color scheme. The more times a word appears, the more prominence it is given in the cloud. If you want to direct people to a specific part of your website or show them a quick step-by-step process, then screenshot images are one effective way to go about it - show people, don't tell. Creating them is as simple as using a snipping tool like

Skitch (https://evernote.com/skitch/) (or even the Print Screen key) to grab a snapshot, then adding text and arrow annotations before sharing. Or if you want to add a bit of visual flair, check out a service like PlaceIt (http://www.placeit.net), which allows you to insert a screenshot onto professional stock photos of devices captured in real-life settings. Screenshots are also useful if you simply cannot find a suitable image: grabbing block quotes, ordered lists, or short paragraphs (stuff that can be easily digested) is the best option here. Infographic-style images needn't be big, full pieces of work. Sharing a snippet of fascinating or impressive data in the form of a graphic with a text overlay, or a chart can be just as powerful. Examples might include the number of hours it takes to manufacture a single pair of bespoke shoes, how the amount you've given to charity has increased over the years, or how many cups of coffee your team gets through during a busy week!

*A note on perspective and comparisons*
Customers viewing your products online are doing so on flat (often small) pixilated screens - way different to the experience they'd have inspecting them in real life. With this in mind, consider posting images from multiple angles (perhaps as a collage) to give the best look that you can. And if size is an important part of your product, think about juxtaposing it next to a common household item (or your competitor's product!) so that customers can easily judge the scale.

**Experiment with animated GIFs**
While the popularity of animated GIFs has prevailed for many years, their usage has boomed thanks to more accessible creation tools and faster Internet connections. Animated GIFs are currently supported on Twitter, Facebook and Pinterest (and, of course, make create additions to blog posts), and they are an easy way for brands to add a fun, engaging element to content. A few methods for their use include: demonstrating a tricky step in a how-to guide, replaying a hilarious moment from a recent event, ad campaign, or behind the scenes at your business, flashing up the benefits of a product or service, making an announcement, thanking a customer, relaying a reaction or emotion like happiness, surprise, or fear, or simply

creating a cool effect like an seamless loop, in a much more dynamic way than text or static emoticons. Check out Giphy (http://www.giphy.com) to search for and discover a massive archive of animated GIFs, create your own using software like Photoshop or simple web tools like Make A GIF (http://www.makeagif.com), and use Loop Findr (http://loopfindr.tumblr.com/) to build animated GIFs that contain seamless loops.

**Host contests on social media**

Contests (promotions, sweepstakes and drawings) are a staple strategy for many brands on social media, and they're a great way to increase awareness of your company, generate buzz for a new product, encourage engagement, and build communities on your profiles. The goal of a social media contest should be to attract highly engaged fans who will stick with you after the promotion ends, slowly converting into loyal regular customers. To this end, offer a prize that targets your audience's wants and needs (e.g. free coffee for a week if you own a coffee shop, a free pampering session if you own a spa, a store-specific voucher, etc.). Contests with generic prizes (Amazon gift cards, iPads, etc.) will attract low-value fans who aren't necessarily interested in your brand offering, and unlikely to convert to loyal fans and customers in the future. To further prevent unwanted entrants, make your contest last for a long time to put off those people only looking for the chance of a quick win (perhaps weeks or even months depending on the prize), and also make the barrier to entry something that only true fans would take the time to do. Other simple ideas for contest success include making it easy for people to share news of the contest onto their friends, hosting a joint contest with a related business to share audiences, and considering paid promotion to encourage entries in the campaign's infancy.

# Facebook Tips: Marketing Strategy You'll Like and Share

Facebook is the most visited social network in the world, with well over one billion users on desktop and mobile. As the king of social networks, your target audience is almost guaranteed to be there. Use these tips to build, brand and market your business on Facebook, as well as amass a following of highly engaged customers.

## Facebook Business Page Setup Strategy

Before you dive in and start posting on Facebook, it pays to take some time to lay solid foundations to help get your brand presence set up properly, and in a position to impress fans when they find you. Let's get started on the road to making your little corner of Facebook a *destination* that people will visit regularly.

### Create a Facebook Page, not a personal profile

When you sign up to Facebook, you are assigned a Personal Timeline by default. Personal Timelines, sometimes referred to as profiles, are designed for individual, non-commercial use. For your business to take advantage of everything Facebook marketing has to offer, you must create a separate Facebook Page. Facebook Pages look similar to personal Timelines, but provide unique tools for brands like analytics, custom tabs to host business-related information, and advertising tools. Pages do not require separate Facebook accounts and do not have separate login information from Timelines. You can create a Facebook Page in one of three ways: by searching 'Create A Page' in the search bar at the top of the site, by clicking the 'Create A Page' button at the top of any existing Facebook Page, or by visiting https://www.facebook.com/pages/create.

**Note:** If you are currently using a personal Timeline for business purposes, there is a possibility that Facebook will find and shut your account down without notice. To give you a chance to correct this error, Facebook provides a tool that will convert your personal Timeline to a business Page, available at https://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php?migrate. When you convert your personal account to a Facebook Page, your current profile picture will be transferred and all the profile's friends will be switched to fans who "like" your Page. In addition, your account's username will become the username for your Page, and the name associated with your personal account will become your Page's name (you may be able to change this if you wish - I explain how in the next tip). No other content, including your wall posts, photos, videos, etc. will be carried over to your new Page, so be sure to download an archive of this data (via your profile settings) if you want to preserve it.

If you are currently utilizing your personal profile for a mix of things - for its originally intended purpose (i.e. to interact with friends and family) *but also* (and wrongly) for commercial use - the best thing to do to avoid getting into trouble is to halt all business activity on your personal Timeline, create a separate business Page, then encourage your audience to de-friend your personal account and head over to "like" your new Page where they can stay up to date. While building a Facebook Page is essential for businesses on Facebook, there are also several ways to utilize an individual Timeline - in a non-commercial way - to engage with customers and clients on a more personal level. For now, we're going to concentrate on Pages, but look out for Timeline-based tips in the *Using Your Personal Facebook Profile to Boost Business* section at the end of this chapter.

**Keep your Facebook Page name short; get it right the first time!**
If at all possible, try to keep your Facebook Page name short, as this will help if you go on to create Facebook ads, where the headline space in the advert (often the name of your Page) is limited to just 25 characters. You can only change the name of a Facebook Page manually if it has fewer than 200 likes, so make sure you are happy with yours early on. If you are *not*

happy with your Page name and it qualifies to be changed, go to the "About" tab located underneath your Page's cover photo. Click "Edit" next to the Name section and save. Changing your Page's name does not affect its username or Page web address (explained below).

**Get a custom Facebook web address for your Facebook Page**
Set up a vanity URL for your Facebook Page (available when you gain 25 likes), ideally named after your brand, e.g. www.facebook.com/yourcompanyname. This will make it much easier for you to tell people how to find your Facebook Page. Think about it carefully, as you will only be able to change this URL *once* in future (via the "About" tab), otherwise you will have to delete your Page and start over - not good if you've built a big fan base! To reach the 25-fan threshold quickly, invite your e-mail contacts and current Facebook friends - a community of people who already care about you and your brand - to visit and "Like" your Page, via the "Promote" drop-down menu at the top of your Facebook Page.

**Fill in business info accurately and in detail**
Fill in as much of your business' details as possible in the About section of your Facebook Page, including address, contact details, product information, website (add multiple URLs by separating them with commas in the website box), and links to other social profiles. Putting the effort into populating these sections makes your Page helpful to customers who can see all of your essential information in one place, and the keyword-rich blurb is also good for search engine optimization (SEO), as the text in your About section is indexed by Google. Restaurant owner and selected Restaurant/Cafe as your Page's category? Make sure you include the types of foods you serve, and also upload your menu as a PDF for customers to browse, or if you're in the U.S. or Canada, you can also add a menu through SinglePlatform.

Note: Depending on how your Page is categorized, sometimes the first-viewed bit of the About section displays differently on the Facebook mobile app than it does to desktop viewers. For some mobile users, it will show your Short Description, others your Mission, and others still, a portion of your full Company Description. With this in mind, it may be wise to amend

all of these sections to begin with your website URL so that you can guarantee that is always the first thing that mobile users see.

**Verify your Page and get an official check mark on your cover photo**
If your business has a real world address, Facebook allows you to verify your Page to adorn its cover photo with an official grey check mark - similar to the blue one given to celebrities and other public figures. To verify your Page, visit your Page Settings and choose Verify Page under the General menu. You'll need to confirm your business-representative status via a telephone call to a publicly listed number for your business, or otherwise upload an official document, e.g. business phone or utility bill, business license, business tax file, etc. Verified Pages appear higher in search results and show people at a glance that you are the official brand Page for your company on Facebook, so it's well worth doing.

**Create an awesome cover photo and add a call-to-action button**
Facebook Page cover photos are viewable by anyone on Facebook, so use the space to effectively communicate your brand or message in one simple, high quality, image. The ideal size is 851 × 315 pixels - any smaller and Facebook will automatically stretch the image, making it appear blurry. Ideas for cover photos include one powerful image that communicates who you are and what you do, a collage of your products, highlighting an ongoing offer, or featuring a photo or testimonial submitted by one of your own fans - the latter will really "wow" your customer and hopefully they'll spread the word to their friends. Keep users engaged by periodically updating your cover photo and profile pic - once per month is a good target to aim for, but a seasonal change is popular amongst brands, too.

*Add a call to action, offers and links in the cover design and description*
In December 2014, Facebook announced the roll out of solid, clickable call-to-action buttons that can be added to cover photos, including "Book Now", "Contact Us," "Use App. Designed as a way to bring your business' most important objective to the forefront of your Facebook presence, call-to-action buttons can be linked to any destination on or off Facebook. Dollar Shave Club used a "Sign Up" call-to-action cover photo button and saw a

2.5x higher conversion rate over three weeks compared to other comparable efforts.

When you upload a cover photo, click on it and you will be able to edit it to add a text description. Here, type a short, relevant blurb, then add in a call to action and related links to your website, a product, an offer, a Page tab, or feature a discount code as a reward for clicking. Many Facebook Page visitors click on cover photos for a closer look, so use the description as a way to anchor the photo and encourage them to take action. The description will also appear when someone hovers their mouse cursor over the cover image - just another reason to make the most of it. To encourage more clicks on your cover photo, you can try experimenting with a "button" as part of your cover design with its own call to action, e.g. *"Get 10% off your next purchase with us - Click Here!"* Alternatively (and to tempt the people who won't click on your Page's cover photo - call to action or not ) - you might want to use it to let non-fans know what value there is to them in "liking" your Page, e.g. Free DIY tips, daily dessert recipes, regular parenting advice, etc. Every time a Facebook user "likes" your Page, a large part of your cover image (along with your profile photo) will show in the News Feed of that person's friends, inviting them to "like" the Page too, so do your best to make the design as compelling and visually representative of your brand as possible, even at a smaller size.

**Note:** Facebook most recently amended its rules about cover photos in July 2013. They read: *“Covers can't be deceptive, misleading or infringe on anyone else's copyright. You may not encourage people to upload your cover to their personal timelines.”* Facebook has been known to remove the cover photos of Pages who don't follow along, so stick to them in order to avoid any nasty surprises. Once upon a time, Facebook also told Page owners that their cover photo could not feature text that covered more than 20% of its entire area. This restriction no longer applies, which means that you can include contact details and pricing and purchasing information about a product in your cover image to whatever extent you like. While this is mostly good news for marketers, I would still advise caution. Too much text can make a cover photo look spammy and unprofessional, so I would

recommend at least some restraint, as the instant visual impact of a great cover photo cannot be understated.

**Upload a Facebook profile photo recognizable at a small size**
While the cover photo dominates your Facebook Page, arguably, it's the profile photo you choose that can have the most influence overall, as it is seen all over the site: in the News Feed of followers, in posts on your Page's timeline, in all comment replies, and of course, overlaying your cover photo. The recommended upload size for a profile photo is 180 x 180 pixels, but it is displayed at 160 x 160 on your main profile, and as small as 43 x 43 pixels next to comments. Ideally, the image you choose should be recognizable (or at least distinct) at this smallest size. The best thing to do is to create a large square image - something like 640 × 640 pixels (or as big as you want, really). When uploaded, it will automatically be scaled down to 160 × 160, look nice and crisp, and anyone who clicks on your profile photo for a closer look will see the large image in all its glory. As with the cover photo, edit the description of your profile photo to add some relevant blurb and a link to your website or an offer, as a way to reward those curious enough to click it.

**Note:** With design in mind, upload a profile photo that complements your cover image designs, and vice versa. Don't be afraid to tweak the colors of your profile photo to help the hues match, but do ensure that your brand logo is still recognizable.

**Create Facebook Page custom tabs to promote your services**
Custom tabs display in the "Apps" section on the left-hand side of your Facebook Page and are great little hub for things like promoting your products and services, most popular blog posts (NetworkedBlogs is a good choice), for hosting contests, sharing customer testimonials, inviting people to “Like” your Page to be notified of exclusive news and offers in their News Feeds, or encouraging people to sign up to your e-mail list (I use MailChimp). Just search for a particular kind of app in Facebook's search bar, e.g. "contest app" and chances are it will be automatically suggested to you and can be installed in just a few clicks. Apps can also be used to cross-promote your other social profiles like Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube,

Twitter, etc. One of the best ways to populate custom tabs to appear exactly as you desire (with branded design, links, etc.) is with the free Static HTML iframe app. As an example, I used the Static HTML app to build a 'Welcome' tab, which encourages users to "Like" my page for free social media video tutorial updates, and gives information about my book, with a clickable link to purchase it at Amazon. To get started, simply find and install the Static HTML iframe app via the Facebook's search bar. If the relatively basic coding required by the Static HTML iframe app is beyond your knowledge (and you don't have a developer to help you), check out "freemium" services like Pagemodo (http://www.pagemodo.com) and Woobox (http://www.woobox.com) that, through a simple step-by-step process will allow you to build customized custom tabs.

**Note:** Given the huge number of users accessing Facebook on phones and tablets, whenever you share links to custom Facebook tabs and apps, verify that the resource is mobile-friendly before you launch. Many are not, and you might unwittingly exclude a huge segment of your audience.

**Customize tab images, re-order, and rename to encourage clicks**

When you install a custom tab app, it will often appear with a generic tab image and name -hardly good in encouraging people to click on it. With most apps (except those for which the developer has ruled against it), you will be able to edit these details. To do so, click on "Settings" at the top of your Facebook Page, then choose "Apps" from the sidebar. In the "Added Apps" section, click "Edit Settings" on the app you want to customize, then click "Change" to upload a new image and enter your desired tab name into the box provided. Custom tab images are 111 × 74 pixels, and are best used to make the app stand out, and to unify and enhance the overall branding of your Facebook Page.

As well as apps displaying on the left-hand side of your Page, links to your About, Photos *and* a link to one of your custom tab apps will also appear as horizontally-displayed text links underneath your Page's cover photo - the rest will be hidden below a "More..." button in the same position. To select which custom tab link you want to appear underneath your cover photo,

arrange it to appear at the top of your Apps list by choosing More > Manage Tabs, then dragging and dropping it to the top of the pile. While it is in this prime position, compel people to click it by changing its name to a call to action using the instructions above. Examples might include. "Click here first!" (linking to a tab containing more info about your company), "Click HERE to win!" (linking to a contest tab) or "Get 10% off!" (linking to a tab containing a discount code.

**Note:** As well as being able to re-arrange the order of custom tabs *within* the Apps section, you can also re-order whole sections, e.g. Likes, Photos, Posts to Page, etc. on the left-hand side of your Page - the position you move them to will depend on their importance, and required visibility to you and your fans. To do this, hover your cursor over a section, click the pencil icon that appears, and choose Manage Sections. In the pop-up window that appears, simply drag and drop the sections to re-order them as you see fit (the People and About sections are fixed to the top, but all others are fair game.

**Cater to mobile customers by encouraging check-ins, and using Place Tips**

When a user views your Page and business information on the Facebook mobile app, they’ll also be shown information like which of their friends have visited and checked in, and whether they or the wider Facebook community have recommended you with photos, star ratings and reviews on show. Knowing this, it pays to encourage people to “check-in” if you have a real-life location. Display notices in prominent areas of your establishment, such as the entrance, receipts and point of sale, to prompt customers to get out their smartphones, check-in and inform their friends of where they are, encouraging them to visit too. When a review is left for a business, a status update is created that goes out to the News Feed of that customers' friends, along with the business' cover and profile photo and its star rating.

If a customer is already at your location and opens the Facebook app, Place Tips come into play. Place Tips uses Wi-Fi, GPS, and Bluetooth (for the latter, you can apply for a Bluetooth “beacon” to beam your information via

http://bit.ly/facebookbeacon) to *automatically* show visitors more information about your business, including the aforementioned reviews, photos, check-ins, etc. In addition, it will encourage people to check-in and like your Page and, via the About section of your profile, you can specify a custom Welcome Message to greet customers to your establishment - perhaps give them a heads-up on offers and discounts too!

**Add a Facebook Page Plugin and share buttons to your website**

To promote your Facebook Page on your website, grab the code for a Facebook Page Plugin (formerly the “Like Box” at https://developers.facebook.com/docs/plugins/page-plugin and embed it into a suitable spot on your website – the top of a sidebar is a popular choice. When you set up the plugin, make sure to check the options to “Show Friends’ Faces” and “Show Page Posts, as this will ensure that the plugin shows viewers the profile photos of any of their friends who already like your Page, as well as a scrollable, clickable preview of your most recent status updates. Although most Facebook Page Plugins are placed in website sidebars, some people have had success by inserting the widget *underneath* blog posts. In this position, the plugin works as part of a call to action, e.g. *"Did you enjoy reading my blog post? Yes? Then, click "Like" to stay updated on Facebook..."* Why not experiment with the position of your Page Plugin to see which works best for you?

In addition to the Facebook Page Plugin, embed the Facebook "Like" and "Share buttons on top of, besides, or underneath the blog posts and products on your website. Doing this encourages people to broadcast their love for your work to their friends and also lets them choose how they want to do it: "Like" posts links to Facebook with one click, while "Share" allows them to add a personalized message before posting. Grab the code for these buttons by searching the web for 'Facebook Like button' (Google 'Facebook Like button') or by visiting the Facebook Developers' page at https://developers.facebook.com/docs/plugins/like-button/., or automatically via a service like AddThis (http://www.addthis.com).

**Note:** For access to all kinds of official Facebook brand assets for you to use online and offline (including Facebook logos and "Find Us on Facebook" badges) simply visit https://www.facebookbrand.com/

## Facebook Marketing Basics

Now that your Facebook Page is looking great and you're encouraging people to visit it, let's explore some ways that you can make the most effective use of the platform, in conjunction with the content strategy ideas described in the previous chapter.

### Pin important posts

Facebook allows you to pin a single post to the top of your Page's timeline for up to a week. Use this to feature important content, and make it more visible to fans who visit your Page. All new status updates will appear below the pinned post until it is unpinned (or a week elapses), whereupon it will fall into its original chronological position. After creating a post, hover over it until the pencil icon appears, click it and choose 'Pin to Top'. In particular, posts to consider pinning include special announcements, contents, promotions, etc.

### Boost interaction with Facebook-embedded posts

In August 2013, Facebook rolled out the ability to embed personal profile or Page posts into an external website. Use embedded posts to lift conversations from your Facebook Page to help encourage and boost interaction with your statuses in places away from the site, like as part of a blog post, or even in an e-mail newsletter as a way to drive readers to your Page. As long as the status update you post is public, *anybody* can embed it from your Facebook Page or re-embed them from wherever else it appears, which - if your status is really shareable - could give your Page and content a lot of exposure. Embedded posts even include buttons for viewers to "Like", comment, and Share the post, *and* a button to "Like" your page.

*How to embed a Facebook post*

1. Hover over the post you want to embed, left-click on the arrow that appears, and choose "Embed Post".

2. Copy the code that appears and paste it as HTML on your website or blog.

**Re-post top notch content, but don't be spammy about it**

As not everyone checks their Facebook News Feed all day every day, and only a small proportion of your fans will see your content first time around, if you have a killer article or link to share, post it several times as a way for as many of your fans to see it as possible. However, make a concerted effort to share the information under different guises, e.g., different wording in the text, an image with a link, a link share post, etc. Although image-with-a-link posts are worth experimenting with, traditional link share posts come most often recommended because they reflect the way that the average person uses Facebook... when did you last see a friend sharing a link with an uploaded image? Facebook will penalize your reach if you publish the exact same status over and again, as it has found people react negatively to "copy and paste" posts.

**Encourage clicks through call-to-actions but avoid "click-baiting"**

To encourage higher click-through rates from Facebook and other social media to your website and blog, being specific about what you want your customers to do using a clear call to action is often a good bet, e.g. *"Click here for more information [your link]"*. Sometimes that little push can make all the difference between a successful status and one that sinks without a trace.

**Note:** In relation to the above, it is worth pointing out that August 2014, Facebook amended its News Feed algorithm to crack down on so-called "click-bait" article-sharing. These are typically articles with vague and over-promising headlines like *"You'll never believe who puked on the red carpet last night... CLICK to see our exclusive pic!"* that do not make it plainly clear what the post will entail. Facebook wants you to share valuable content that people will read and share with their friends, so if it spots that your fans are clicking on these types of links and returning straight to Facebook (because the content is poor) and *not* sharing, similar posts will receive less visibility in the future. Conversely, high quality links that get shared many times over will benefit from higher reach.

**Guarantee views with "Get All Notifications" and “See First” strategy**
One tactic that can be used to all-but guarantee that fans see all of your Page's content is to train them to select the "Get Notifications" and “See First” options, found in a drop-down menu when hovering their cursor over the "Liked" and “Following” button underneath your Page's cover photo. With this selected, every time you post a new status update, the fans in question will be informed with a notification under the blue "globe" icon in the status bar of their Facebook account, *and* your new content will appear at the top of that users’ News Feed respectively. These requests are best communicated through a status update with a screen grab of the menu, to demonstrate the exact action that you wish them to take. Whether or not you are comfortable with asking at the risk of appearing pushy is up to you, and you should judge it based on the strength of the relationship you have with your audience. If you do decide to do it, I wouldn't force it upon fans very often, particularly as they are unlikely to be right on your Page when they see your instructions appear, and even more unlikely to click through and carry it out.

**Optimize blog images to make an impact on Facebook**
In September 2013, Facebook introduced a significant increase to the size that thumbnail images from linked articles appear in the News Feed. When you post a status update including a link, Facebook will automatically pull an image from the article, and as long as it is of sufficient size, that image will display at full width on your Page and in News Feeds, with the blog title and blurb below it. In exact terms, for a linked article's image to display at full width on Facebook, the width of the image needs to be 1.91 times its height. Facebook recommends an image that is at least 1200 × 630 pixels, which, truthfully, isn't realistic for most bloggers. Instead, aim to produce blog posts that include at least one image that is 600 × 315 pixels (even if it an image that is uploaded large, but shrunk to fit your blog's formatting style), as this is the minimum size that Facebook requires for any linked article's image to display at full width in any position on all devices - desktop, mobile, or tablet. If your linked article's chosen image is below 600 × 315 pixels, Facebook will automatically shrink it much smaller.

**Note:** When you paste a link into the status box and the automatically-generated preview appears, two small arrows appear on top of the thumbnail image allowing you to select the most appealing photo from the article. If none of the available thumbnail images takes your fancy, click the "Upload Image" link and choose one that is saved on the hard drive of your computer. You can edit the text in the headline and description fields that are generated, too, if you wish to make them more effective. On the rare occasion that you paste a link to share and no preview image appears at all, you may have to debug the page - essentially forcing Facebook to refresh its cache of your site. Simply visit the Facebook Debugger tool at https://developers.facebook.com/tools/debug, paste in the URL of the Page with the problem image, and click "Debug." Wipe your status box clean and try pasting the link again; the problem should now be fixed.

**Note:** Somewhat related to the previous tip regarding the popularity of images and quotes in particular, why not try the following: Pick out a blog post's most quotable, shareable snippet and turn that into an image either as a quote on its own or coupled with an appealing photo. Then, link back to the blog post from the text box in a status update and monitor how well the post is received.

**Alternate between YouTube-linked and Facebook-uploaded video**
The emergence of video content on Facebook has changed the landscape of the social network, and it's only going to get bigger. In many cases, it pays to upload engaging video content directly to the site, rather than, for example, sharing a YouTube link. This is because native Facebook video is given a more favorable ride in terms of reach (but keep an eye on your analytics to see how things go). If the video is "evergreen" in nature (i.e. it'll still as relevant in the future as it is now) why post the video twice - once by uploading directly to Facebook, and at a later date via a shared YouTube link?

*Strategies to maximize the impact of videos uploaded to Facebook*

- Videos uploaded to Facebook play automatically – and are muted with no audio - within the News Feed. With that in mind,

consider how you will hook your fans into watching your clip (and turn the sound on) from the very first frame – catching someone's eye with movement in the first 2-3 seconds is one way to do this, or if a person is seen talking in front of camera, fans who are interested will click to hear what's being said.

- Organize videos into playlists via the Video tab on your page (to encourage increased watch time), and choose one video to Feature. The Featured video will appear in prime position below the "About" section in the sidebar of your Page - a great opportunity for an introductory video to your business, or to highlight a current promotion.
- Tag people who feature in your videos, add descriptive labels, and select the best thumbnail available in the menu that appears after the file has been uploaded (or upload your own custom image). And don't forget to grab the video embed code to include in a blog post on your website to encourage more exposure and interaction – choose between embedding the whole status update, or just the video player itself for a cleaner look.

The video content you choose to post should reflect the same types of stuff referred to in the *"Explained: The Best Type of Content to Post on Social Media"* chapter of this book.

**Use hashtags to encourage engagement and conversation**

In June 2013, Facebook joined sites like Twitter, Pinterest, and Google+ by rolling out the use of hashtags, which appear as clickable links in Page and personal profile updates and in posts on the news feed. Hashtags are a way of grouping similar types of content together, and can be created by typing a hash or pound symbol directly before a word while composing a status update or comment on your Page or personal profile, like this: *"What do you love about your local #walmart? Tell us using the hashtag #lovewalmart and we'll choose the best to feature on our website"* or *"It's Gap's summer sale, with up to 50% off! Come take a look... #gapsale."* where "#walmart" and "#gapsale" are clickable. Clicking on a hashtag will open up a feed where you'll see stories from the Pages and people who have posted with the same hashtag. People can use hashtags in Facebook

search to discover posts related to specific topics or interests. Billions of pieces of content are shared on Facebook every day - peaking in the 8-11pm primetime slot - so hashtags provide a huge opportunity for brands and marketers to participate in conversations in a meaningful, relevant and timely way. While hashtag use hasn't blown up in the way Facebook imagined it might, used sparingly they still can be of benefit.

*Several ways to use hashtags effectively on Facebook*

- Use one or two strategic hashtags related to your brand or industry in your Facebook posts, particularly if they will be used for cross-platform promotion), e.g. #yourbrandname. You can also use hashtags as a way to express an emotion or sentiment relating to your post, e.g. #shoptilyoudrop, #excited, or #itstheweekend.
- Every Facebook Page has its own unique URL with a status update box at the top; the format of the URL is www.facebook.com/hashtag/yourhashtag. Drive traffic to that URL from other locations, e.g. your blog, other social networks, business cards, in-store marketing materials, etc. to encourage conversation. Use a URL shortener like bit.ly to make the link even more memorable.
- Discover new Pages and partners by scouring for specific hashtags in Facebook search, and track your own hashtags to monitor what people are saying about you and your brand, then join the conversation.

**Note:** For much more advice about making the most of hashtags on social media, check out the section on hashtags in the Twitter Tips chapter of this book.

**Ask for Likes and Shares – and invite Likers to Like your Page**

Ask users to 'Like' and Share your content when you post, so that it will be shared on their walls and in their News Feeds, therefore increasing exposure for your Page. Don't appear desperate by doing it too often (Facebook will limit the reach on these types of posts if you do, especially if the content associated with the post is poor), and word it in a way that

endears you to your fans. Buddy Media found that action keywords like “post,” “comment,” “take,” “submit,” “like” or “tell us” are the most effective. Be direct in your request, and fans will listen and take action. Enhance the experience by creating a community that encourages your fans to discuss topics and interact with each other within the comments. Did you know, too, that you can invite people who liked a post but *haven’t* liked your Page, to do so? When a post has had more than a handful of likes, the message below it will read “[name], [name], [name], and [number] of others liked this.” Click on the “others liked this” bit for a list of everyone who liked that post, and a notice of whether they have liked your Page or not (chances are that many people will only see your post as a result of someone else engaging with it, and they being notified). If they haven’t, you can click “Invite” next to their name to send them a notification asking them if they’d like to. If they’ve enjoyed your content once, there’s a greater chance they’ll be open to seeing it again.

**Note:** On a somewhat related point - and here's an opportunity to create common bonds and emotional ties between your brand and fans - did you know you can humanize your Facebook Page updates by sharing what your business is feeling, watching, reading, listening to, drinking, eating, playing, traveling to, looking for or exercising? Just click on the smiley face in the status update box and select one of the options.

**Keep your engagement timely**

If someone comments on a status update you make or posts a public message on your wall, be sure to reply to it as soon as possible. Any chance to further the conversation, answer a query, or give thanks for a customer's support is all but lost if there is no reply – and it's something a lot of businesses on Facebook fail to do, to their detriment.  If your Page is really busy and you simply don't have the time to respond to every fan comment, giving a "like" (rather than ignoring them) will at least show that you are listening to what they have to say.

**Use @mentions to be personable and up engagement**

When replying to individual fans' comments on your Page, use the @username function to address each person individually. It'll add a personal

touch to your service and make the customer in question feel special, especially as they'll receive a notification to let them know you replied. Type @ and begin typing the name of the person you want to reply to immediately afterwards. When their name appears, select it with a mouse click or the tap of a finger. If you want to be more informal and address a customer only by their first name, place your cursor at the end of their surname (after it appears in the comment box) and hit backspace a few times until their surname disappears. To that end, add a personal touch to any status updates or comments you make by 'signing' with your first name. This is especially useful if multiple admins are addressing fans on the same page.

Using @mentions can also be beneficial towards the number of people that see your Page's content. In February 2014, Facebook announced that when one Page tags another in a status update, e.g. *"Thanks to @Perfect Pizza for supplying our prize giveaway this week - you guys rock!,"* or *"Here's an awesome insight into how @Perfect Pizza makes its delicious food [link]"*, it may - depending on the levels of engagement - show the post to some of the people who like or follow the tagged Page - Perfect Pizza, in this case. Knowing this, always @mention other Pages when giving them a shout out in one of your posts,  and also select top-performing posts from Pages that your fans will enjoy, and share these (with @mentions) on your own Page. The Pages you mention will receive notification that you included them in a post, and this kind of cross-promotion is good for relationship building, increasing the chances of traffic being sent to your Page as a result - either through reciprocal treatment in the future, or if Facebook re-shares your status to fans of the Page in question.

**Add Timeline milestones, use as marketing opportunities**
Facebook allows you to add Milestones in the history of your business (past and present) on your Page by scrolling through and marking dates on your timeline (e.g. when the business was established, your 1000th sale, etc.). These help flesh out your company history and can give customers a fascinating insight into your growth over the months and years (particularly if you were in business way before Facebook rolled around). You can even use upcoming milestones as a way to connect with customers and provide

them with an incentive to remain engaged, e.g. *"Here's to each and every one of you for helping us reach 20,000 fans! Check back tomorrow at 6pm for a special promotion to say thanks!"*

As a twist on this strategy, and as a way to really make your customers feel a sense of ownership over your Page, why not highlight them and their stories as milestones on your Timeline? Ask fans to submit stories that explain how your product or service has affected their lives for the better, then add them - with images - as milestones that show just how much a part of your brand your customers are, and as encouragement for other people to invest in you just as much.

**Thank your newest fans and have a fan of the month**
Post a special 'Thank You' message about once a week to welcome new fans, even listing them by name if there aren't too many - find them via the "See Likes" link in your Page's Admin Panel. Doing so adds a personal touch to your communication, and reflects well on your image as a brand that cares about its audience. To encourage further engagement on your Page, launch a "Fan of the Month" initiative. By highlighting one of your most loyal fans in this way, you indirectly encourage other fans to engage more, so that they can win the coveted title the next month. For an added incentive, offer a little prize to the winner. There are several free "Fan of the Month" apps available via the Facebook search bar, and paid versions with additional options if you're interested in delving deeper.

**Create Facebook Offers**
If at least 50 people have liked your Page, you can create an offer on your Facebook Page. When a fan claims an offer, they'll receive an email that they can show at your business' physical location or a code to enter online so that they can get the discount. Offers aren't free to run (there is a minimum spend of around $5 - $10), but they are useful in promoting special deals, rewarding loyal fans, and encouraging them to spread the word about your business to their friends. To create an offer from your Page, click Offer, Event + and click Offer from the top of the status update box. Fill out the details to make your offer shine, including Headline,

Image, redemption link, start date, and expiration date. Preview your offer in the top left and make any changes, then click Post Offer.

Some pointers to help run a successful offer include:
Make offer discounts substantial (at least 20% off a product or service, or the opportunity to get something else free when purchasing is recommended for the best results), and ensure that it is exclusive to Facebook fans.
Keep your offer and its terms and conditions simple, and give people a reasonable amount of time in which to claim it (this also allows them time to spread the word about your great deal to their friends.
Use simple and direct language in your headline to reduce any confusion, and showcase the value of the deal your fans will get, rather than just using a slogan.
Use a clear and engaging image to represent your offer, but *not* your profile photo, as that will often be displayed next to the promotion around the site.
Pin the offer to the top of your Page for added visibility, and train your staff so that they are prepared for when a customer wants to redeem their offer.

**Facebook contest strategy for success**
As of August 2013, Facebook re-allowed contests to be administered *on Page Timelines*, not just through third-party apps like Woobox, Shortstack, and Heyo. Businesses can:

Collect entries by having users post on the Page or comment/like a Page post (e.g. *"Like this post for a chance to win one of our new sandwich toasters - releasing March 21!"* or *"Comment with a funny caption for this photo - the one that makes us laugh the most / gets the most likes wins X prize."* or "*Post a photo in the comments of you using our product - our favorite will win X prize."* or *"Suggest a new menu item in the comments below, our favorite will go into production and the inventor will win X prize!"* Another spin on this entry method is to ask viewers to comment and tag a friend to enter. Your fans will tag friends who would be interested in winning the prize, and this will drive interest in your Page and product or service. This route works best if you can reward the winning commenter

and their tagged friend with a prize, e.g. dinner for two at your restaurant, or two free gifts of your product.
Collect entries by having users message the Page (e.g. *"For your chance to win this fantastic sweat band, message us using the button above and tell us why you deserve to win!"*)
Utilize 'Likes' as a voting mechanism, e.g. *"Help us choose our next smoothie flavor. Click 'like' to vote on your favorite pic and we'll choose one lucky person to win a $20 gift card with us!"*

**Note:** Free tools like Agorapulse's Timeline Contest page (http://contest.agorapulse.com/) give an easy way to host and select winners from Timeline sweepstakes, quizzes, or photo contests.

While creating a promotion on a Page Timeline is faster, easier and cheaper (great for a spontaneous giveaway for example, but more likely to attract poor quality entrants), third-party apps - while requiring a small fee - still do have many advantages, and I would certainly recommend them over Timeline-only contests for bigger and more serious campaigns. Advantages of apps include:

A more professional and customizable campaign, more in line with your branding strategy.
More space and flexibility for content than a Page post alone, as they are hosted on a Page tab.
The ability to collect data (such as e-mail addresses) in a secure and structured manner.
Easy to add "share" buttons to increase virality of contest once someone has submitted their entry.

Whichever type of contest you run on Facebook, there are still important legal guidelines to follow, including offering terms of eligibility, and releasing Facebook of any association. I implore you to read the Promotions section of Facebook's Page Guidelines for a full rundown:
https://www.facebook.com/page_guidelines.php

**Promote Events on Facebook – Ask fans to subscribe**
Click on the Events tab in the status update box to create your event, whether they will happen offline (like a store's grand opening) or online (like a live webinar or the start of a sale). Be sure to upload a photo of the event - a step that is often overlooked, and also build excitement with countdown statuses reminding people to confirm their attendance as the event gets closer. When you create an event, you can also add targeting so only the most relevant people will see your Page's event in their News Feeds. You're even able to target your event's invites based on criteria such as gender, location and age at the bottom of the Create New Event window. Events help promote your Page organically because when someone RSVPs to one, it will create a story in their friends' News Feed. To get more fans on board, post the event well in advance and periodically remind (via Page posts) that it's all happening soon!

**Note:** Page admins can easily repeat a Facebook event with the Create Repeat Event option in the drop-down box on your Event page. In addition, to prevent the need to invite fans to events within their area, you can invite them to subscribe. When a fan subscribes, they will automatically be notified when your event is in their locality – ask them to subscribe by clicking on "Events" below your Page's cover photo, and hitting Subscribe.

**Cross-promote with (and on) other Facebook Pages**
One of the most powerful ways to increase the number of genuinely interested eyes that come across your Facebook Page is to work with other Page managers within your niche, or businesses local to your own. Get in touch to discuss ways in which you can occasionally cross-promote each other's Pages, share posts, conjure up offers and increase exposure for your businesses. For example, a kids' clothes store owner might get in touch with a local ice-cream parlor - places that share the same clientele - to work a cross-promotion arrangement on Facebook. Additionally, you might want to communicate with other businesses to encourage them to add your Page to the Featured "Likes" section of their Page, and agree to do the same in return. This works great with complementary products and services, and helps spread the word of your business, as Featured Pages sit prominently

on your Page, and display on rotation depending how many are set up. *To add a featured Like on your Page, Facebook Page:*

1. Visit and "Like" a complementary business while using Facebook as your Page (or by clicking the three dots underneath its cover photo, choosing "Like as Your Page..." and selecting your company's Page if you're browsing under a personal account).
2. Return to your Page and click "Settings" and then "Featured" on the next page. Under the "Likes" section, click "Add Featured Likes" and choose the Pages that you would like to showcase on your Page.

A more covert way of making your brand known (especially to the audience of rivals in your business niche) is to engage and post relevant, friendly, and useful (not spammy or self-promotional!) comments on statuses of their Facebook Pages, posting under your Page's username (make sure you are posting as your Page by clicking on the flag icon beneath the post you want to comment on, and choosing “Liking and commenting as [your page]”.). Your profile photo and link to your Page will be visible with every comment you make, hopefully encouraging people to visit and check you out. Again, make your comments interesting, helpful, insightful, funny, witty, charming, etc., to increase the chances of a click-through! The last thing you want to do is come across as shady or desperate, especially like those *"It's Andrew from Andrew's Aardvark Farm - just popping over to give you a Like! Check us out!"* kind of posts that commonly occur. If I ever see any type of blatant self-promotion on my Page, it gets instantly deleted!

**Use private messaging for customer service**
Facebook Page owners have the option to allow customers to contact the page administrator directly ("Settings" > "Messages" option). If you have the resources to cope, you should definitely leave this option on, so that customers can get in touch, particularly if they don't want to share their message on the public wall (and this may also prevent unsavory comments being broadcast to all of your fans).

**Utilizing Facebook Groups to build your business**

Facebook Groups are a convenient way to network with peers, strengthen relationships with current customers, or attract new ones - whether you create your own or join one of the millions that already exist. To get the most benefit from groups which focus on discussions concerning your chosen industry, your aim should be to position yourself as an authority figure: be active, give help, and be genuine, i.e. no focus on selling. Over time, your knowledge and influence will be recognized and this will help to pique people's interest, perhaps enough to make them want to consider your product or service. Another big opportunity for business is in local community groups that focus on buying or selling all manner of products and services; most people in built-up areas will be able to find one set up for their town or city. Find your local group, scope out how trade takes place, and offer up your wares in an appropriate manner.

Alternatively, if you create your own group, it can exist as a place to provide customer support, promote upcoming events, get feedback on upcoming products, and for customers to connect, collaborate, and share (valuable consumer insight for you!). Use the group’s About section to explain how the group works, and to steer the conversation and activity you would like to see.

**Track your progress**

Use Facebook Insights (click "Insights" at the top of your Page) to track how your Facebook Page is performing day by day, and over a longer period of time. The Likes tab displays your overall Page growth, and where your audience is finding you, while the Reach, Visits, and Post tabs will show you which types of updates - text, links, video, etc. - are preferred by your audience (click on individual posts for more detailed stats about engagement), and at what times they are most likely to be on Facebook to digest your activity. On the People tab, you'll be able to learn about the demographics of your audience, including gender, age, language, and location. All of this data is extremely useful in helping you to tweak and tailor your ongoing content strategy, and to deliver the kind of stuff that you know your fans will love.

Another notable section of Facebook Insights is Pages to Watch, a feature that allows you to track a variety of metrics relating to your rivals' Facebook activity, including the number of posts, engagement rates, and new Page likes. Adding the competition to this list will enable you to keep an eye on their performance to see what is (and what isn't) working for them, and you can use this knowledge to influence and improve your own strategy. In addition to direct competitors, it is often useful to pay attention to other companies in a similar, but not identical, field, e.g. another retail or B2B venture within your vicinity, as well brands that are unrelated to yours, but which your audience like and engage with (find these by searching for "Pages liked by people who like [your page name]" in the bar at the top of the Facebook website).

**Paid Advertising Strategy on Facebook**

A budget for Facebook advertising is an extremely important consideration as part of your marketing strategy, particularly because the competition for eyeballs on the site's content is ever-increasing, in tandem with the site intentionally decreasing organic (non-paid) reach - especially for self-promotional Page posts. In fact, Facebook now deliberately limits the appearance in the News Feed of Page Post content that features only promotional messages - asking people to buy something, encouraging them to enter a sweepstakes, etc., which makes paid promotion even more crucial. You wouldn't launch a real-world business and expect people to just turn up and continue to maintain their interest without promotion, and a Facebook Page is really no different. Luckily, you don't need to spend a fortune: Facebook ads can be a cheap and effective way to gain new fans, keep existing fans engaged, direct people to your website, or get them to do whatever you please on the way to reaching your marketing goals. Consider this: if you allocate just $1 of marketing spend per day on Facebook ads, your content will be exposed to several thousand people that would not otherwise have seen it. If you are doing this and your competitors aren't, you'll be way ahead in the awareness game for your business niche.

*The most basic Facebook advertising: boosting posts*

To increase the ordinary reach of your most important posts - like special offers, big events, or a company milestone, Facebook encourages you to use

its "Boost Post" tool, located via a button underneath each and every status update. Boosted posts last for three days and will increase the reach of your content beyond the people who see it organically. In basic terms, boosted posts create a set of instant Facebook ads, without any of the detailed customization options available through the main Facebook ads tool. Boosted posts do the following:

1. Promote your post within mobile and desktop News Feeds of Fans.
2. Promote your post within mobile and desktop News Feeds of Fans, their friends, and via a limited set of variants like age, gender, interests, and location.
3. Generate a Sponsored Story ad within mobile and desktop News Feeds.

The eventual cost of a boosted post depends on the number of people you want Facebook to try to expose to that specific piece of content. Costs range from a maximum budget of just a dollar or two for a few thousand people, to hundreds of dollars if your aim is to reach many thousands of users. Once Facebook approves your boosted post in accordance with its "no more than 20% text if an image is used" guidelines (more on this topic below), which doesn't normally take very long, the promotion will begin. The amount you are charged rises as your boosted post reaches more people, but if you don't feel like you are getting value for money, you can stop the promotion at any time. On a similar note, you can add to your initial maximum budget if the promotion is going better than expected. If your boosted post does not reach the number of people Facebook estimated it would reach, based on your budget over the three-day window, you will only be charged according to the number that it did reach.

*To get the most out of boosted posts, remember the following:*
Wait at least 5-6 hours before boosting a post - let its organic reach take hold and settle first.
Once a post is boosted, it may take some time until it reaches the full breadth of your target audience. Will it still be relevant as much as a few days away from when it was first promoted?
Don't boost every post. Spend money on increasing exposure to content that will drive meaningful engagement or make an impact on your bottom line,

e.g. eyes on a new product or service, or clicks through to a valuable blog post.
Pin your boosted post to create additional visibility for the promotion.
Measure the success of your boosted post through Facebook Insights and other analytics tools.

**Note:** If you're a small business owner that wants a quick and easy way to increase the visibility of standout posts a couple of times a week, then boosting posts should be a very strong consideration. If you are want a bit more control and customization *or* aim to build complex advertising campaigns on Facebook, utilizing the main ads tool and Power Editor respectively make more sense - see below for more information on these.

*Beyond the Boost: Facebook Ads Strategy*
If you decide that boosting posts is too simplistic for your needs, the Facebook Ads tool at https://www.facebook.com/advertising is a marked step-up, with many more customization options and, crucially, it's pretty user-friendly. Some of the options available in the Facebook Ads tool include:

- Choosing what the ad promotes depending on your goal (your Facebook Page, a particular post, a Facebook event, a custom tab with a newsletter sign-up form, an external website, etc.).
- Choosing where on Facebook the ad appears (e.g. desktop and mobile News Feeds, right-hand column).
- Adding a call to action button to ads to increase click-through rates, (e.g. Shop Now, Read More, for web-based targets, or Call Now, Get Directions for local, mobile customers).
- Choosing who the ad targets (based on location, age, gender, interests, and connections). Before targeting non-fans, I would suggest honing in on existing fans (many of whom won't have already seen your content or promotion organically, as well as your email list - both which Facebook enables you to do).
- Tracking conversions like registrations, checkouts, and views of key pages on your website.

While Facebook's main advertising tool will be suitable for the vast majority of businesses, those with large and complex advertising needs may prefer to use a tool called Power Editor (http://www.facebook.com/powereditor) to create, manage, and track their ads on Facebook. If Boost Post is for beginners and Facebook's main ads tool is for the masses, then Power Editor is for "pros". It's the least user-friendly of the bunch, but includes experimental options that may be useful to those who like to micro-manage their ads, and perhaps who are running lots of campaigns at once. The Power Editor too is much more accessible to use than it has been in the past, so don't be afraid to take a look.

*Tips for Facebook ad creation*

Whether you stick to Facebook’s main ad-creation tool or bravely plump for Power Editor, the following pointers will help maximize the success of your promotional campaigns:

- When writing copy, speak to your ideal prospect; don’t try to be everything to everyone. Tell your perfect customers what makes you unique and why investing time in (and clicking) your ad is worth their time. Craft a headline that addresses the "you" to make the person reading feel like you're speaking directly to them.
- Create at least four versions of each ad per campaign so you can experiment with different images (both promotional and more natural/lifestyle in focus), calls to action and copy so that you can clearly understand which ones are performing the best.
- Test a variety of ad types (lead ads product ads carousel, video, etc.) in a variety of placements (News Feed, mobile, and sidebar) to see how the results vary. News Feed and mobile ads should (as much as possible) blend naturally into the ordinary stream of Facebook content, while for the smaller sidebar ads in particular, subtle call to actions and images with human faces or simple color combinations, seem to work best.
- Test a variety of target groups, based on criteria such as age, gender, Pages liked, interests, location, etc. Be sure, too, to

utilize Audience Insights to gain a deeper understanding of the people you should target, based on Facebook usage, purchase activity, lifestyle, household size, etc.). If your advertising budget is small, hyper-target your audience - around 100,000 people is a decent sample. To target specific individuals and those most likely to be interested in your offering, get savvy with advanced targeting options such as lookalike audiences, custom audiences, partner audiences, re-targeting, website custom audiences, and conversion pixels, in order to get the most bang for your buck (look out for these terms during the ad setup process and use the "?" button next to each for a fuller explanation.

- Use a structured naming convention for your ad campaigns, ad names, and ad sets to make identifying and tracking them easy. With campaigns, for example, I like the format *"[Business/Client Name] - [Page Name] - [Item Promoted] - [Objective]."* The Business/Client Name qualifier may or may not be necessary, depending on your circumstances.
- When budgeting and bidding, don't sweat too much over terms like cost CPC, CTR, CPM, etc. Instead, focus on your business' cost per desired action, e.g. clicking a link and signing up to your email newsletter. This method will allow you to calculate your return on investment, i.e. how many conversions you drove per dollar spent, much more easily.
- Want to gauge early on if your ad is hitting the nail on the head? Look for its Relevance Score in your ad reporting - a rating of 1-10 based on how your audience is responding to your ad through likes, clicks, comments, etc. It appears after the ad has received at least 500 impressions. One simple strategy is to keep your budget low, tweaking your ad until you achieve a relevance score of 8/10 or higher. At this point, you can think about promoting the ad more heavily, but always keep an eye on the ad in case the score (which update sin real time) starts dipping.

**Checking your ad image adheres to the 20% text rule**

Facebook places a "no more than 20% text allowed" rule on images used for ads - if your image exceeds these boundaries, your ad might be rejected

during the review process, thus delaying the start of your campaign. If you want to check that your photos meet the text rule guidelines, there are a number of handy tools to help you do just that, including Facebook's own Text in Images compliance tool at https://www.facebook.com/ads/tools/text_overlay. Simply upload a file and click the boxes to highlight the areas where text appears. The tool will count up the percentage and let you know if your image is Facebook-ready.

I could write a whole other book on Facebook ads - much more than I have the space to include here, unfortunately. Until I do, a quick web search will return plenty of detailed step-by-step guides for making the most of Facebook ads, and I definitely recommend you do this before jumping in, getting bogged down and lost in the options available, and simply wasting your money! Be smart, start small, and remember that there is no one guaranteed formula for Facebook ad success; experimentation is the key. Advertising aside, your main focus should be on producing top-quality content that gains maximum traction organically. Typically, I only spend "big" on any ad campaign (whether it be a Boosted post or properly-planned ads) if I have a product or contest to launch, a coupon code or offer to give away, or if an organic (non-paid) post does surprisingly well and I think it has strong potential to go viral. The rest of the time, I rely on a small, but regular ad budget solely used to help new fans find my Page.

## Using Your Personal Facebook Profile for Business

As explained at the beginning of this chapter, using your personal Facebook Timeline specifically for commercial purposes is against the site's rules. However, there are a number of useful little strategies that you can implement via your individual profile that can help support your overall business marketing.

### Add a Follow button to your personal profile

If you are the figurehead of your company and happy to share your personal profile's updates with customers as a way to help them feel more closely connected to you, but don't want them all to be added as friends, consider adding a Follow button to your profile via https://www.facebook.com/about/follow.

Anyone who chooses to become a follower will see posts you mark as Public (toggle this option via the drop-down menu underneath the status update box) in their News Feeds. Use this ability to filter updates about your family to Friends, and updates pertinent to your business, or things that you're comfortable sharing with a wider audience to the public.

**Note:** Visit your Timeline settings ("..." button on your profile > Timeline Settings), then click on the "Followers" link in the left-hand menu. From here, you can adjust your Follower settings and also grab code that you can use to embed a "Follow" button on your website, too.

**Create custom lists to target business-y posts to friends**
Related to the tactic above, Facebook's custom lists feature allows you to target status updates to customized groups of people who are also connected to you as friends. Again, these shouldn't be promotional or commercial in nature, but perhaps stuff like news and events occurring within your industry that only a specific portion of your friend list would be interested in:

*To create a new custom list:*
1. From your home page, hover over the Friends section in the menu on the left and click "More."
2. Click Create List.
3. Write in the list's name, e.g. "Current Customers". Enter the names of the people you want to add to this list in the Members section.
4. Click Create.

By clicking on the links that now appear in the sidebar of your Facebook account, you can easily see, comment, like, and interact with activity from people in your lists. Remember to peruse you custom lists often for opportunities to more deeply connect with your peers, building relationships that will eventually pay off as part of your business strategy.

**Change your personal profile 'Work' to your business page**
If people search for your business on Facebook and come across your personal profile, you'll want to make it as easy as possible for them to find

your business Page too. Click on the 'Update Info' button at the top of your profile and search for your Facebook Page in the 'Where have you worked?' box and choose it when it appears in the drop-down menu. If you *don't* see your Page appear when you type its name into the box, try typing its username instead, i.e. the bit that comes after the 'www.facebook.com/' of the Page's address. If you're still having no luck, insert your exact Page name, click the drop-down that appears and enter the additional details (Position, City/Town, etc). When you click 'Add job', it *should* populate correctly.

**Note:** Here are two more soft-sell Facebook Page promotion opportunities: add the URL to your Facebook Page under the 'Website' area of the Contact Info section of your personal Facebook profile. In addition, add your personal profile as a Featured Page owner on your Facebook Page. When you add a featured page owner, your personal information will be displayed in the About section of the Page and the Page will be shown on your personal profile.

**Learn about (and capitalize on) the ad strategies of your competition**

If you’re your company’s ideal customer, then you’re going to be your competitor’s ideal customer, too. As such, chances are that you are going to be exposed to ads from your competitors in your personal News Feed - keep an eye out for them. You may discover that your main rival seems to advertise mostly on Wednesday evenings, that they appear on mobile and not desktops, and that certain types of images seem to get more attention than others. It's far from scientific, of course, but by grabbing screenshots and making notes, you'll have some broad information that you can use to capitalize upon when it comes to running your own paid ads.

# Twitter Tips: Tweet Your Way to the Top

Twitter is used by millions of businesses and individuals as a way to monitor conversations about their brand, interact with customers, manage customer service issues, promote offers, share rich and engaging content like images and videos - all within 140 characters per tweet. A 2013 study by analytics company KISSmetric even found that Twitter users were more likely to buy from brands they follow on the site by a margin of 64 percent, and that's just one statistic about a site that has the power, arguably greater than any other social network, to connect with customers and to create loyal brand advocates. In this chapter, we'll explore some of the ways to make this a reality for you.

**Twitter Profile Setup Strategy**

No stellar Twitter strategy is complete without a profile built to knock the socks off your customers, so let's get started with some indispensable setup and optimization tips.

**Top Twitter username, and a tip for the "Name" box**

Your Twitter username is extremely important, as it will make up part of your Twitter profile URL - the address you'll put on all of your marketing material to direct people to follow you on the social network. Try to keep your username short, simple and memorable. Most companies use their brand name as their username, so that their address reads www.twitter.com/yourbusinessname. Unlike most other sites, Twitter will allow you to change your username as many times as you like via its Settings menu, but it's worth remembering that if you've publicized one username for a while, unexpectedly switching to a new one would not make good business sense.

**Note:** Although Twitter says 'Enter your real name, so that people can recognize you', this is not best practice for businesses. Here, enter your

brand or business name, as it will appear right at the top of your Twitter profile in big, bold letters.

**Write an engaging Twitter Bio, use real names**

Your Twitter profile is likely to appear high up in web search results for your individual or business name, so it's crucial that you use its 160 character bio right (the bio text is used as the search link's description and, of course, appears on your Twitter profile itself). Use the small space to accurately and succinctly tell people who you are, what you do, and why they should follow you; use an upbeat tone to reflect Twitter's fun and conversational nature, and if you're an individual, single "descriptor" words separated by commas, lines, or hyphens (e.g. globetrotter | entrepreneur | wine lover..." are commonly used space-savers. If you're a company, it's a good idea to include the real name of the person handling your Twitter account so that customers feel like more like they're talking to a person rather than a faceless brand. If you have room, you might also want to throw in a URL, or @mentions to link to other accounts you are associated with, and even brand or industry-related hashtag, too - but be careful that the latter doesn't mess up the readability and balance of the bio as a whole.

**Upload an effective Twitter profile image**

Ditch the default Twitter avatar and use a photo of yourself or brand logo. You could even combine the two, but make sure that a face is clearly visible - Twitter's one-to-one interactions mean that people will identify much more closely with a profile that displays a person's smiling face rather than the dreaded default 'egg' image or something similarly anonymous. Twitter recommends that your profile image be uploaded at 400 x 400 pixels. To edit your header image, click the "Edit profile" button on your page and then "Change your profile photo."

**Create a custom Twitter header image**

In April 2014, Twitter rolled out a new version of its desktop profiles, complete with a big 1500 x 500 pixel Facebook-esque header image - a large banner that spans the whole width of the page, ripe for customizing with your own design. Although a majority of Twitter users now access the site via mobile devices, there's certainly no harm in making sure your

desktop profile captures the imagination of the still-millions of people that browse on desktops. How you choose to fill the header image is up to you, but tactics similar to Facebook - simple branding, highlighting promotions, featuring customers, etc. are a few of the most common strategies. To edit your header image, click the "Edit profile" button on your page and then "Change your header image."

**Create a custom Twitter background image**
In previous versions of Twitter for desktop, users could upload a custom design that spanned the whole width of the profile page's background. Although this is no longer possible on the "home" page of a Twitter profile, you *can* still insert a background image to appear when someone clicks on an individual tweet to view it (and the conversation attached to it) on a separate page. Although the eyeballs this portion of your Twitter profile's branding will be considerably less than that your cover photo, the people that *do* click individual tweets are, by nature, probably more interested in what you have to say, so the background customization here might appeal to them more than the average Twitter user.

**Note:** Download Twitter header and background templates optimized for desktop and mobile screens (and lots of other great stuff) via the *Premium Content Bundle* chapter of this book.

**Should you post your Tweets to Facebook?**
Your Twitter profile settings include the option to send your tweets automatically to the wall of your Facebook Page. Whether you decide to use this is personal preference - but my advice would be to avoid it, for several reasons. Chances are that you are going to be posting on Twitter much more regularly than Facebook, so you risk the chance of spamming (and upsetting) your Facebook fans. Secondly, you want people to be fans of you on Twitter AND Facebook, and to be able to offer both audiences a unique, valuable experience. They won't come to Twitter if they can get it all on Facebook. And lastly, but perhaps most importantly, automated posts (whether written by hand or produced by a bot) are never received as well as a post that is individually crafted for its intended audience. The ways you

communicate with your Twitter and Facebook audiences are different, so it's best to keep them separate.

**Tell customers when you're available to help**
Lots of customers now turn to Twitter to help solve their problems with a company, and expect a prompt reply when tweeting - studies place the expected response time at around 30 minutes or less! If you intend to use Twitter as an outlet to handle customer service queries, then it is a good idea to let people know when you will be on hand to answer questions. Is it 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, between 9AM and 5PM EST Monday to Friday?  Or just 'as soon as we can'?  To help reassure customers that you will respond and provide clear expectations, include information about when you will respond, and how long it will take, within your Twitter Bio or as part of your profile's cover photo design.

## Twitter Marketing and Content Strategy

How's that Twitter profile looking? Pretty good? Great! Now let's look at some content strategies to help your brand presence on Twitter shine...

**Concoct the perfect tweet, add a sign off**
Spelling, punctuation and grammar all count, especially when you only have 140 characters to communicate your point in a single tweet. Practice writing the perfect tweet, and always double-check for errors. While it might be tempting to use text speak to cram as much as you can into Twitter's 140-character limit, doing so is at best unprofessional, and at worst makes your tweets unreadable. If you have multiple tweeters on the same account, be sure to allow space to add a 'sign off' at the end of each tweet, e.g. initials like "^AM", so customers are clear who they are corresponding with. And as consumers want to know who they’re interacting with, why not include a photo of the people responding to users’ inquiries in your Twitter cover design too?

**Don't exceed the tweet limit**
Wherever possible, do not allow your Twitter statuses to spill over into multiple tweets, as this makes it confusing for your followers to keep track of what you are trying to say, especially if they have a really busy Twitter

feed, where your updates may appear sandwiched between tweets appearing from other people that they follow. If there is no way that you can keep a Twitter update to 140 characters or fewer, consider using a service like TwitLonger (http://www.twitlonger.com/) as a workaround. This site allows you to type as long a message as you like. When you submit the message, it will be sent out to your followers using your Twitter account. The first portion will be visible, then a URL will be displayed to allow followers to click through to read the full message at the Twitlonger website.

**Tweets: aim for quality and consistency; don’t spam**

Don't post tweets every minute of the day, spamming your followers' feeds and annoying them enough to unfollow you - be sparing. Independent research has shown that posting more than two or three tweets an hour can result in a decrease in engagement, while Twitter's own research found that brands that tweet two to three times a day can usually reach an audience that is equal to 30% of their follower base during any given week. Of course, a lot of factors can affect this estimation (e.g. if one particular tweet goes viral and the rest do not), and you can measure this with the site's analytics tool, but the principal stands - quality always trumps quantity.

**Tweet your top content several times, schedule for ease**

Twitter does, theoretically, show people all of the tweets from people who follow an account, but the site is so dynamic and fast-moving, and people also check them at different times of the day, that your content can easily be missed. To help prevent this, don't be afraid to post the same content under different guises, several times a day (i.e. experiment with unique wording and different headlines for the same article one or two hours apart, then note which wording performed best).If you produce a lot of valuable "evergreen" blog content, i.e. that which will remain useful no matter its age, use a service like Buffer (www.bufferapp.com) to schedule and automatically post tweets linking to this content periodically. Here's a free tutorial, which shows how you can upload in bulk: http://bit.ly/scheduleoldblogtweets

**Note:** On Twitter, many people simply share the title of a blog post followed by the link. There's nothing wrong with this approach, but you

might also want to experiment with other methods to lead into the content and to see if they garner more clicks and engagement. These including sharing a short quote from the article, giving a brief opinion, or asking a question about it – particularly through Twitter's simple two-question Poll function (click the poll icon in the tweet box to set one up).

**Share engaging content, use past success to shape future content**
To help grow your followers and build relationships with customers, share the types of selfless and engaging content we talked about in the "*The Best Types of Content to Post on Social Media*" chapter of this book, including links to useful and interesting content (whether your own or by others). Use Google Alerts to be notified of fun, fresh, and relevant content for your Twitter feed and followers. If you will be including a link to your own content within a tweet, always shorten it beforehand using a site like bit.ly. Twitter will shorten links automatically, but using bit.ly also allows you to customize them for neatness and analyze the click-through rate, which is great for seeing what kind of content resonates best with your followers. When using a shortened link on Twitter, double check that it works before posting. One broken link might mean a customer never clicks on your URLs again. To compound the impact of a tweet containing a link, upload an image with it to help it stand out within people's news feeds.

Use a tool like My Top Tweet (http://www.mytoptweet.com) to discover your 10 most retweeted posts to date. Use this information to create new tweets based on what you discover, or recycle the content to get it in front of newer followers.

**Use hashtags to group tweets, drive engagement, and research**
Use #hashtags to group tweets of the same kind and to highlight your message. Top-trending hashtags appear on Twitter's home page, and can easily be found via Twitter search. Tweets that include hashtags have been proven to receive twice as much engagement as those without, so their usage is vital. Don't include more than one or two hashtags per tweet, as it can get confusing for followers; engagement with tweets that include more than two hashtags tails off considerably, research shows. Short hashtags

work best. #ilovechocolatecakeandeatiteveryday - a hashtag like this is difficult to read and eats up precious characters within your tweet. In addition, use legible formatting. Symbols don't work too well, and capitalizing words helps make hashtags a bit more readable, e.g. #BigSale rather than #bigsale. Here are some more important benefits of using hashtags on Twitter and other social networks:

*To strengthen your brand identity*
Use custom-made hashtags to bolster your brand identity and location, e.g. #billysburgers #BerwynIL respectively, especially useful when new customers click to learn more about you. Fans also love to show off what they're up to with friends via text, image, and video updates. If you are holding an event or launching a new promotion, make sure these fan updates are tied together strongly by publicizing and encouraging the use of a representative hashtag before, during, and after.

*To gather feedback and measure ROI*
More than ever, users of Twitter and other social networks are tagging their updates with "emotion" hashtags, e.g. *"Had an awesome meal at Betty's Grill today! #stuffed #bestburgersever."* Whether the sentiments are good or bad, they can often give you a deeper insight into your brand image than you imagined. Hashtag search tools like Hashtagify (http://hashtagify.me) and Tagboard (https://www.tagboard.com) provide a way to find top recent tweets related to any given hashtag, conduct competitive hashtag analysis, and track hashtag use across different platforms.

*To join in on conversations*
In relation to the last point (and in the same way as you would use keywords in Twitter search to find ongoing conversations related to your business), use the hashtags and comments that you find associated with them to reach out to people: be helpful, offer suggestions and recommendations, etc,. as a way to build trust and authority - don't be pushy or self-promotional. Be tactful with this approach, using our initiative to decide when it looks like someone wants to receive a reply, and when they might not.

In summary, people who see a hashtag tend to click on it, explore it, use it in their own posts or even check out the person or brand that tweeted it, according to a 2013 study carried out by RadiumOne, so I would definitely recommend including them in your updates where relevant.

**Pin important Twitter posts, use as marketing opportunity**

If you want to spotlight a particular tweet, you can pin it to the top of your feed for extra visibility - all subsequent posts will appear below it. On the desktop version of Twitter, click on the three little dots underneath a tweet and choose "pin to your profile page." Use a pinned tweet to highlight one of your most engaged-with tweets, an important announcement, an upcoming event, a tweet that summarizes your brand and its mission, or a message that spurs emotion and encourages people to share and spread brand awareness through retweeting, e.g. something funny or inspirational.

**Leave space to encourage tweet comments; fashion your own**

As lots of people like to add their own comments to the back of someone else's tweet (when retweeted via a program like Tweetdeck, for example) or a link shared to Twitter from an external website, I recommend that manually-typed tweets and those that are auto-created when someone hits the "Tweet" button next to a blog post or item on your website) do not exceed 120 characters wherever possible. That leaves a retweeter 20 characters to add their own response. To frame this tactic as when it is you who is the tweeter or retweeter of someone's opinion or cool link you've found, you can use the remaining space to express your reaction, e.g. *"Love this by @janejones!"* or pose a question to your followers, e.g. *"Do you ever use this strategy?"*

**Promote and sell with the Twitter widget and Tweet button**

Twitter has its own equivalent of the Facebook "Like" box, which shows a live preview of your Twitter stream's latest activity, along with a "Follow" button and a box for users to tweet to you. Create yours at https://twitter.com/settings/widgets and embed it prominently on your website to attract new followers. To increase website page views and to drive sales,

you can also grab an official Twitter "Tweet" button to place above or below each of your blog posts, or next to products on your website (when someone tweets from the button, it will be seen by many of their followers who will be encouraged to take a look). Set one up at this link: https://about.twitter.com/resources/buttons. When you set your "Tweet" button up, make sure to check the box to show the tweet count (the more times a post or product link has been tweeted, the more likely someone else is to share it too), and include a hashtag relevant to your brand that will automatically be added to the auto-generated tweet. However, you'll want to switch up the "Share URL" and "Tweet text" options depending whether the button will sit on a blog post or product page.

For blog posts: Set the Share URL option to use the page URL, use the title of the page for the tweet text, then enter your username into the via box. An example might read*: "How to Use Snapchat Stories to Captivate Fans http://www.andrewmacarthy.com/-captivate-fans-with-snapchat-stories #snapchatmarketing via @andrewmacarthy."* The long URL will automatically be shortened by Twitter.

For product pages: Set the Share URL option to use the page URL, but customize the tweet text to read like the sharer is tweeting about the item personally, and not in over-promotional manner, e.g. *"I love these stripy Craesa sneakers from Aldo #aldoshoes http://www.aldoshoes.com/women/shoes/trainers/30189991-craesa/16."* Again, the long URL will be automatically shortened upon tweeting.

**Encourage retweets and social sharing using Tweet This**

Short, helpful, and inspirational quotes are a brilliant way to market you and your business on Twitter, and one of the coolest ways to implement this strategy is via the free Tweet This website at http://dashburst.com/tweet-this/.

*Here's how it works:*

1. Enter a quote from your blog or website that you want others to tweet.
2. Click the "Generate Tweet Link" button to create a custom link URL and embed code.

3. Share the link and/or get the embed code.

If you imagine the following quote is a part of one of my blog posts or a page on my website, the final result from Tweet This might look something like: *"Consistency is one of the key strategies to rocking your social media strategy via @500socialmedia [Tweet This]"*, where ["Tweet This"] is a clickable link that opens up the user's Twitter account, pre-populates the status update box with my chosen quote, and is ready for them to share with all of their followers instantly. Notice how I included my @username to add an element of attribution, which might also gain me some new custom. Another strategy for Tweet This involves using it on the "Confirmation" page that loads after a purchase on your website has taken place, as an opportunity to encourage someone who has just purchased to share their excitement about the transaction, e.g. *"I just bought a copy of 500 Social Media Marketing Tips - I'll be a pro in no time! #socialmediamarketing [product link]."*

**Respond to @mentions and DMs in a timely manner, and with personality**

Whenever you receive notification of an @mention of your brand, be sure to respond as soon as possible. Replying to a customer or fan with a mention is a quick, easy, and hugely powerful way to make someone feel like you’re really paying attention; it makes them feel happy and appreciated and, in turn, promotes positive connotations towards your business. Just think how lovely (and sometimes unexpected!) it feels to receive a quick thanks or comment from a brand or personality that you admire, and you’ll begin to realize the value in this approach. A lot of the bigger businesses don't reply to a large proportion of brand mentions, and it hits their credibility hard. As I’ve harped on about plenty already in this book, people on social media like to connect with other people. So, try to fit in some brand personality to your replies where you can, using your tone of voice and mentioning the person by name. It's a great way to bring business accounts to life and truly connect with the customer. To go that extra mile where the situation calls for it, a follow-up tweet like a simple “Everything still good?” is a fantastic way to ensure that a customer’s issue is truly resolved.

As well as mentions, keep a close eye on any direct messages (DMs) you receive, and use them to respond to customers quickly and efficiently, too. As of April 2015, you can opt-in to receive Direct Messages (DMs) on Twitter from anyone, whether you follow them or not. In the past, Twitter users could only send a DM to someone if they followed them first, and both would need to follow each other for a two-way chat to occur. By opting in to receive DMs from anyone, you make it easier for customers to initiate a private conversation with you - great for customer service issues that demand it, and stopping some negative interactions from being broadcast in the public Twitter feed, where everyone can see them. To opt-in, check the "Receive Direct Messages from anyone" box in your Twitter settings.

**Note:** If you start a tweet with "@username," that tweet will be recognized as a reply and, in the main, will only be seen by the person you have mentioned. So, if you want a reply to be seen by everyone on the site, including your followers, be sure that the @mention is not *right* at the start of the tweet. One tactic used to do this on occasions where the @mention is best-placed at the beginning of a tweet is to precede it with a period, e.g. ".@username)".

**Use Twitter Search to discover and connect with customers**
Aside from direct @mentions of your brand (those which you'll receive a notification about), use Twitter Search to find people who have indirectly mentioned your business name, website address, area of interest or expertise etc. and interact with them to begin building a meaningful connection – in many cases, they'll be even more surprised and delighted that you have made the extra effort to reach out to them. Don't jump in all sales-y (even if it looks like the opportunity is there). Start a conversation, get to know your customer a little, and then, maybe a few tweets down the line, start to move the conversation towards your end goal. Target your search by location and date in the Advanced Twitter search (https://twitter.com/search-advanced) for more localized and time-specific results, and use keywords within quotation marks and the minus symbol (-) to omit

results with unwanted keywords, e.g. "'Paula's Prom Dresses -tiara'" - any other Boolean search technique will also work. One cool strategy is to use keywords associated with your business to find the problems which people are tweeting about, and target the issues that your business can solve. Pair your company's name or related ideas with words like "bad" or "sucks" to find people spouting negative feedback, and do the same using common misspellings of your brand name, @mentions, and a search for your domain name, e.g. "andrewmacarthy.com" to catch instances of people tweeting about your content. In addition, search using the question mark symbol ("?") to look for questions related to your brand or industry. On a similar note, make sure to filter search results to "Show All", not just the "Top Tweets." You never know, one single helpful tweet could lead to customer loyalty that lasts for years. Warble Alerts (http://warble.co) is a nifty tool that checks Twitter for the keywords and phrases you select.

Twitter search won't display every tweet mentioning your keywords or hashtag that has ever existed, but it will look at a variety of types of engagement, such as favorites, retweets and clicks, to determine which Tweets to show. Although some mentions might be weeks or months old, it is still worth retweeting or engaging with them, as you never know where a dormant mention may lead.

**Note:** Upon searching and finding a Twitter user that you think your service can help, do not be overly aggressive in your attempts to connect or constantly tout your product or service as a solution - you risk doing more harm than good with this approach. Instead, your first few interactions should be sincere and helpful. Play the slow game; add value and your expertise to the conversation by passing along a helpful blog post, or simply asking questions and showing sympathy for the person's predicament - make it the *beginning* of your sales funnel, not the last step. This strategy has been shown to be much more successful in building trust with potential customers, especially as your approach is essentially "cold calling."

**Save Twitter searches**

Use the ‘Save search’ feature on Twitter to quickly access regular searches that you make, such as those searching for mentions of your brand name and keywords related to it.

*To save a Twitter search:*
1. Type your search query into the search box at the top of the page and hit return.
2. Click on the gear icon and select ‘Save search’ from the drop down menu.

*To revisit a saved search:*
1. Click anywhere in the search box at the top of the page. A list of your saved searches will appear below the search box.
2. Click on the saved search to revisit results for that query.

**Search and 'steal' customers from the competition**
If you have a local competitor, search for tweets mentioning their business name as well as your own. I wouldn't wholeheartedly recommend replying to the tweets you find, because it could come across as too being too desperate or forward, but just knowing what is being said about your competition can be enough to give you ideas to help you up your own game and give you a competitive edge. If you *do* decide to respond to tweets mentioning your competitors (if the rival firm doesn't ever reply, for example), be helpful and conversational with no put-downs and no hard selling. Hopefully your good grace will get the customer in question to switch allegiances.

**Show appreciation with favorites**
For a more subtle way to thank your followers for their kind words about your business, favorite a tweet by clicking the star icon next to it. Not only is favoriting tweets an easy way to collate customer testimonials - or ‘save’ a tweet that you want to think about or investigate before replying to (they appear in the Favorites menu of your Twitter profile for easy reference) - but a user is also notified when one of their tweets is favorited. Different to retweeting, however, is that this notification is not shared publicly – only with the individual to whom it applies – so it looks a little less like you are

tooting your own horn… not that it's a bad thing to do very occasionally! Some Twitter users favorite any tweet that happens to mention them, but as your Favorites are publicly visible via a link at the top of your profile, you may want to use it to collate messages in a more strategic way, such as a way to "wow!" anyone who happens to take a peek at the slew of amazing feedback you have received.

**Thank your newest followers**

When someone follows you, be sure to @reply to thank them if you have the time, or retweet something interesting from their feed - it's a good icebreaker at the start of what, hopefully, will be a long relationship. Don't be tempted to use a tool to auto-thank users who follow, or send them promotional material. As a first impression, it doesn't go down well at all. I usually say something like this to initiate conversation: *"Hey, @newfollower, thanks for following! How are you doing today? Andrew."*

**Use images to drive engagement, as a text replacement, and to tease offers**

In research carried out by Hubspot in 2013, tweets that included photos were found to be significantly more likely to be retweeted than those without. The study also revealed that tweets containing pictures uploaded directly to the site are nearly twice as likely to be retweeted as those from external sources such as Instagram - the latter display as plain text links rather than appearing directly within the feed.

While images and uploaded to Twitter appear within the feed, they do not always display in their entirety. To stop the feed becoming too cluttered, photos over a certain height are reduced to a letterbox-sized preview window that a user must click to expand to view the image in full. Twitter's in-stream previews use a 2:1 aspect ratio; this means that the image preview is twice as wide as it is tall. To work out how much of any given image will show within the stream, take the width of the image you want to upload and divide it in half – this is the amount of vertical space you get for your image preview, which is centered vertically in the original image. By keeping the focal point of an image as close to the vertical center as possible, you ensure that it gets seen without anyone having to click on it. Even better,

you can crop an image to 2:1 before you upload it, so that the entire thing is visible in the preview. Alternatively, you can use the need to expand an image to create "expand to reveal" offers that encourage people to click to see more, e.g. click to reveal a discount code or special message. Think about the ways you can use images on Twitter in conjunction with (or largely instead of) a text update to communicate a message to your audience that might otherwise be difficult in just 140 characters.

**Note:** Download a Twitter image template (and lots of other great stuff) via the *Premium Content Bundle* chapter of this book.

### Video marketing on Twitter – short clips and live streaming with Periscope

The Twitter mobile app provides an easy way to film (or import), edit, and share clips direct to your profile. The maximum length of a Twitter video is 30 seconds and (like on Facebook), videos posted to Twitter play automatically within users' feeds. While text is going to be your predominant method of communication on Twitter, occasionally replying to tweets via video - such as answering a question in a Twitter chat - is a fun and engaging way to let your fans get to know the people behind your brand. Video replies is one specific way to use Twitter video for business, but please refer to the *"Explained: The Best Types of Content to Post on Social Media*" chapter of this book for plenty of ideas for making the most of video marketing, whatever the platform.

If you want an even *more* dynamic way to interact with your Twitter followers (and beyond), download Periscope, Twitter's live streaming app. With one tap, you'll be able to broadcast instantly with your fans – to show them behind the scenes, to answer questions, to support the launch of a product, or whatever you like! Here are a few quick tips to ensure that your Periscope live stream is a hit:

- Promote your stream in advance – through Twitter and other avenues, to encourage as many viewers as possible. Maybe make the stream's content a one-off so it becomes a "not-to-be-missed" occasion.

- Host it at the right time: use Twitter analytics to see when your audience is most often online, and host your stream at a time when they are going to be around to watch!
- Use a clear and compelling title to help people identify your live stream – people who follow you on the app will be notified when you go live, and the title will make up part of an automated tweet used to promote your broadcast.
- Depending on your goals for the live stream, choose between a public stream (broadcasting to everybody, whether they follow you on Twitter or not), or private (where you select the attendees from your followers).
- Join in with the live conversation - acknowledge viewers and their questions, and ask for likes and shares as a way to help build your audience for the next stream.
- Analyze your performance within the app – number of likes, views, and replays (anyone can watch your stream for up to 24 hours after it finishes), to see how you can improve your live streaming for next time.

**Upload multiple images and tag them to boost engagement**
Clear evidence that Twitter is keen to bolster the use of images on the site arrived in April 2014, when the ability to attach up to four images to a tweet (previously limited to just one) was introduced. Multiple images display as a collage of four rectangular images on all devices, and also in embedded tweets. Brands are already taking advantage of these collages to spell out a single message across the four separate images, provide simple step-by-step tutorials, or using multiple photos to tell the story of an event in the life of their company. Along with this update comes the ability to tag up to 10 people, e.g. customers, contest winners, business associates, etc. in each image. The people who are tagged will receive a notification to let them know, so do take advantage of this as a way to encourage engagement and start conversations centered on your posts. To top it all off, the characters used to tag usernames in Twitter images will not deplete any the original 140 character space for the accompanying text. To tag people in a photo, select it once uploaded and type their name or username into the "Who's in

this photo?" box. When the tweet is published, the usernames of the tagged people will appear next to it as live, clickable links.

**Twitter contest strategy**
Twitter is a great platform to hold a competition on, to encourage views and interaction with your page, or link to an external source. Entry requirements can be as simple as asking your followers to retweet something that you have written or @replying to answer a question.  If you run a competition, don't ask users to DM you the answer to a question: it shuts off promotion of the competition to vast numbers of users who won't see others tweeting to you in Twitter's search.

**Real-time offers and Twitter-specific codes**
Many people follow brands on Twitter specifically to hear about promotions and discounts, so give them what they want! Offer your Twitter followers special coupons, exclusive discounts, and free samples, to help build your brand's reputation. Create a striking image to help the offer stand out, and post it several times to make sure it is seen by as many of your followers as possible. If you want to measure sales and conversions made specifically through Twitter, tweet a tracking code only to your followers and be sure to ask for it during the transaction. e.g. TWEET20. It is good practice to place a time limit on your Twitter coupons as a way to drive short-term sales by increasing the sense of urgency; between 1 and 2 weeks is a decent time for people to both see and redeem the promotion. For businesses looking to engage and strengthen relationships with their customers, asking people to @message or DM you to receive an offer is one powerful strategy - just make sure you have the means to handle all of the messages you expect to receive!

**Take orders over Twitter**
Why not try taking orders or bookings over Twitter? If you want to give it a go but are worried it will clutter up your main profile, you can just as easily create a separate Twitter account and dedicate that one for taking orders.

**Host Twitter chats for engagement and authority building**

Twitter chats - live, structured conversations between users on Twitter - are an effective way to engage with and build stronger relationships with your audience, and also encourage new people to follow you. Many brands host weekly Twitter chats as a way to build authority within their niche, promote their products and services, and to grow their professional network by interacting with peers. Before you jump in and start your own, I'd recommend searching for and observing a couple of existing Twitter chats within your industry to familiarize yourself with how they work, and to get a feel for whether they might be suitable for your own business objectives. Sites like Chat Salad (http://www.chatsalad.com) feature tons of examples for you to choose from (or you could simply search the web for "[your keyword] + twitter chat), while http://www.tchat.io/ allows you to easily follow and reply in real-time to tweets that include a specific hashtag, i.e. the one uses for your chat! If you want to host your own chat, set a date and time, a unique hashtag (so that others can follow along and join in more easily), and encourage interaction by promoting the event well in advance. Whether you host or join a Twitter chat, remember to contribute valuable tweets to the conversation using the relevant hashtag and retweet others' great responses to praise their input.

**Use Embeddable tweets**

Use embeddable tweets to take a tweet (text or video) or a conversation and post it on your website or in a blog post. You can use this feature to share your Twitter content with a larger audience, e.g. re-capping Twitter chats, or adding positive product reviews or testimonials.

1. Locate a tweet on Twitter.com that you want to embed.
2. Hover your mouse over the tweet and click 'Expand'.
3. Click 'Details'.
4. Click 'Embed Tweet' or 'Embed Video'.
5. Click inside the HTML code box to highlight the code. Copy the HTML code (CTRL+C or Command+C) and paste it as an HTML element into your website or blog.

*Creative uses for Embedded tweets*

- Tweets can be a great source of customer testimonials for your business, particularly if you embed them onto your website or blog.
- Do you host business events? Embed the invitation tweet in a list of upcoming events on your website.
- Embed tweets from other people into your blog posts. Embedded tweets allow your readers to connect with new people and jump into the Twitter conversation right from your blog.
- Embed part of a Twitter conversation (one that has inspired a blog post) into your blog and reach more people than the original Twitter conversation.
- Embed a tweet of a glowing customer comment or add a tweet about an upcoming event in your email signature, to help seal deals and promote your activity.

**Utilize Twitter Cards**

Twitter Cards allow you to automatically attach rich information (photos, video, sign-up forms, additional product details, and more) to tweets that are created when someone shares something to Twitter from your website. As they stand out from ordinary text-only tweets within the site's feed, i.e. the feeds of the tweeter and their followers, they can be a powerful way to boost the number of click-throughs to your original content.  Twitter Cards come in a number of different varieties:

- *Summary Card:* The default option, featuring a title, description, thumbnail, and your Twitter handle. There is also a similar option, but with a larger image.
- *Photo Card:* A Twitter Card that features only a photo. A Gallery Card option also exists; these highlight a collection of four photos.
- *App Card:* A Card to promote mobile apps. On mobile views, it will provide a direct download button, e.g. "Download in the App Store."
- *Player Card:* If your brand uses video or audio for promotion, a player card will allow you to embed a piece of media within your tweet.
- *Product Card:* Allows you to include a title, description, thumbnail image and Twitter username attributed to the product, along with details like as price, location, availability, and more.

- *Lead Generation Card and Website Card:* Cards used to collect email addresses or drive website traffic (see section on Paid Twitter Advertising for more info).
- *Offer Card:* A way for users to add an offer to their credit or debit card and redeem in store instantly, without a coupon (US testing only at present).

Implementing Twitter Cards is as easy as inserting a few lines of code onto your website (the code you use will depend on the type of card). To get started, visit the following page and scroll down to the "Get started in 5 simple steps" section. From here, click a link to the Twitter Card of your choice, and track the success of them via your Twitter Analytics account (more info on this later): http://bit.ly/twittercardsetup

**Create Twitter Lists to segment tweets and organize prospects**

Twitter Lists are perhaps one of the most underutilized functions of the site; they allow you to easily organize and view the content most worth reading from the people you follow, and can also be used as a networking tool, i.e. to interact and engage with the people who you choose to add to lists. Tweets from people in your Twitter lists appear in a separate feed, which can allow you to filter out a lot of the 'noise' on the platform. Examples of groups of people you can sort into Twitter lists include customers, potential customers, your most passionate fans, people with whom you interact most, professional contacts and people who inspire you. By checking in on the activity in your lists, you can more easily pick and choose the most opportune time to reach out with a conversational message, and begin to foster potential relationships.

*How to create and add people to a Twitter List:*

1. Click on the cog icon at the top of your Twitter profile and choose 'Lists', and click the 'Create list' button.
2. Give your list a name and description, e.g. Business Influencers, and choose whether you want to make it public or private.
3. Search for people to add to your list by username, real name, or business or brand name, and insert them via the cog menu in search results or at the

top of their profile. You can also use the same method to add people to a list from your own or anyone else's list of followers.

**Note:** Joining public lists is a useful way to discover interesting, themed content to share, and they also act as ready-made group of people you might want to connect with. To follow a public list, go to a profile, click "lists" and choose the list you'd like to subscribe to. You don't have to follow a person's profile to follow one of their public lists.

**Use custom timelines to organize and curate key tweets**
Twitter introduced custom timelines in November 2013, a feature that affords you more control over how tweets are organized and delivered. Unlike the default Twitter timeline, custom timelines are ones that you create, name, and add tweets to. This means that when the conversation around an event or topic blows up on Twitter, you can create a timeline that surfaces what you believe to be the most noteworthy and relevant tweets. Custom timelines are public and have their own unique URL, making them easy to share with others. They can be embedded onto your website, too! Use custom timelines to help people easily find the latest information about fast-moving events like product launches, flash sales, business conferences, and lots more. To create a custom timeline, download and install the free Tweetdeck program (a brilliant tool for managing your Twitter presence, by the way), then add a new column of type "Custom timeline". To add a new column you can use the add icon "+" in the sidebar or the keyboard shortcut "A". To add a Tweet to a custom timeline, drag it with the move icon and drop it on the custom timeline column that you would like to populate. The share menu for custom timelines includes a link to generate the code to create an embedded custom timeline; just paste this code wherever on your website you want your custom timeline to appear.

**Explore the business potential of Twitter Group DMs**
Twitter's group direct messages – setup via the normal DM option, then adding names or usernames via a search - enable you to you to invite up to 20 users who follow you to join you in a group conversation. When someone joins the chat, they can invite people who follow them, even if those users don't follow you or others within the group - a fantastic

opportunity to introduce yourself or be introduced to others. Some other notable benefits of group DMs on Twitter include making private, one-to-one introductions and connections with influencers and brand advocates, holding group discussions with fellow team members, and resolving a pressing customer service issue involving multiple parties.

**Meet up with followers and promote your Twitter feed**
Find ways to take a step beyond Twitter relationships by meeting your followers and followees in real life - great for taking networking to that next step. At business events, display tweets with the event #hashtag on a big screen using services such as twitterfall.com or visibletweets.com, and tweet to your followers about the experience while you're there.

**Using Twitter for Customer Service: Essential Strategy**
As well as an effective platform for pushing your business and its products or service, Twitter also provides a great way to handle customer service issues. Here are a selection of tips to help you optimize your approach to handling customer queries via the medium of tweets:

*Consider a profile dedicated to customer service*
Depending on your company's resources and levels of Twitter interaction, you may want to consider opening a Twitter account dedicated only to responding to negative queries from customers. The idea here is that you can use your brand's main Twitter handle to focus on positive engagement, sharing valuable content, and posting the odd marketing message - leaving your secondary account open to host conversations with unhappy customers. If this is something you intend to do, be sure to make clear which account customers should tweet to with complaints by placing the @username and an explanation on your website, pamphlets, and in your main Twitter account's Bio or background design.

*Handle acute problems with direct messages*
If lots of people are asking the same question on Twitter in a short amount of time, due to an acute problem, use direct messaging (DMs) to reply to them and prevent clogging your news feed with @replies. To prevent

further negative tweets flying in your direction, post one public tweet to explain the situation, so that it can be seen prominently on your news feed.

*Switch to a personal Twitter account for pressing matters*
For the very most pressing matters, switch to your personal Twitter account to deal with customers who require special treatment to keep them on side. It will show the customer that you really care about them and, perhaps more importantly, it will protect your brand image from a storm of controversy away from your company's Twitter account.

*Measuring Twitter customer service success*
Measuring the success of customer service on Twitter requires a different approach to ordinary Twitter activity (covered later on in this chapter). Some of the metrics that you might want to consider analyzing include the number of @mentions requiring customer service, the response time (how long it takes you to reply to customer queries) and response rate (the number of tweets actually replied to).

**Paid Advertising on Twitter**
While Twitter advertising doesn't have the same extraordinary depth as Facebook's tools, it can still be a very powerful strategy in helping you reach an expanded audience through your tweets. To begin setting up a Twitter ad campaign, click Twitter Ads from the drop-down menu on your profile or visit https://ads.twitter.com/ and click the "Create new campaign" button. There are five main Twitter ad products to choose from, depending on what goal you want to achieve:

*Followers (Promoted Account):* Use simple copy that clearly tells people what you want them to do (follow you!), and spell out the benefits - receiving deals and discounts, exclusive news, etc. Refrain from adding links or images that will detract from that all-important “Follow” button. With promoted accounts, your Twitter username, profile photo and a Follow button will also appear as a suggestion in strategic spots across Twitter on desktop and mobile, such as the Who to Follow box and Home timelines. If using this option, ensure that your profile picture, name, and bio are in tip-

top shape, as this, in addition to your copy, is what people will be acting upon.

*Website clicks or conversions:* Combine this option with a Website Card for greater impact. Unlike an ordinary tweet that may just display a plain link, Website Cards show a preview photo and additional information about your site. The idea is that the eye-catching format of these tweets (complete with image, text caption, story headline and call to action button, e.g. "Read more...") will allow you to easily surface website content within a tweet and drive relevant traffic to your home page, product page, or an important blog post.

*Tweet engagements:* Use this option to drive higher levels of engagement on your Twitter posts; particularly relevant to generating buzz around something like a product launch, upcoming event, or seasonal occasion.

*App installs or engagements:* encourage people to install your mobile app. Users can open or install the app directly within your tweet which will, of course, tell people why they can’t live without your offering.

*Leads on Twitter:* Use this option if you're looking to grow your email list subscribers, and combine it with a lead generation card – detailed earlier in this chapter. Offer potential sign-ups something valuable in return for their email address (prize draw entry, free download, etc.). Persuasive language like “get”, “win” and “receive” can often be used to inspire action.

**Twitter Ads targeting advice**

Use the knowledge you have of your audience to help Twitter define how best to target them with your ads. The targeting options may differ depending on your goal, but include:

*Interests:* As a way to broadly target an audience, picking out interests from hundreds categories and sub-categories is a good way to go about it.
*Followers:* This option – more niche than the last - allows you to reach people with specific interests, or who are similar to followers of accounts other than your own – like competitors, influencers in your industry, and

businesses that *aren't* competitors, but do target a similar audience. Use Twitter's search to find usernames to add, and then use the 'expand your reach' link to find more. Adding around 10-25 usernames per campaign will ensure that you're reaching a large enough audience.

*Tailored Audiences:* If you already have a CRM list, Twitter can use this to target this audience on the social network based on data like email addresses, Twitter IDs, web browsing behavior.
*Keywords:* A way to reach people that engage with or search Twitter using specific keywords.
*Device:* Reach an audience based on what device they use to access Twitter.
*Geography, Language, and Gender:* Target an audience by country, state, zip, language, or their gender in order to increase relevance.

Once your targeting option is chosen, you'll be able to manually select the tweets you want to promote or let Twitter automatically select your five most engaging recent tweets for further exposure.

**Twitter ad budgeting and campaign measurement advice**
How much is one Twitter follower, website conversion, app install, email subscriber, etc. worth to you? Consider this and then set a daily and total budget for your campaign accordingly, either CPC (cost-per-click), CPF (cost-per-follow), CPL (cost-per-lead) or CPE (cost-per-engagement). All campaigns end once the budget has been used, so you'll never be overcharged.

Use an A/B testing approach to Twitter advertising to see which combination of text and images is driving the most engagement at the cheapest price, and use this knowledge to optimize future campaigns. To help you figure all this out, the Campaigns Dashboard will show you a number of metrics related to your paid marketing on Twitter. You may also choose to setup Conversion Tracking within the Twitter advertising dashboard as a way to measure return on investment.

**Monitor all activity via Twitter's Activity dashboard**

Twitter's Activity Dashboard - available via http://analytics.twitter.com - gives detailed insight into how your tweets – both paid and organic - are performing. The dashboard will tell you how many times any individual tweet has been viewed on mobile and desktops, how many link clicks it has received, the favorites and retweets it has attracted, and a month-to-month overview of your activity to show if your progress is on an upward trend. You'll also find data about your followers: (the amount, location, gender, and their top interests), which can be used to work on content more tailored to them. Lastly, you'll find the option to measure your return on investment by tracking the actions people take after interacting with your ads on Twitter, i.e. visiting your website and purchasing a product. Use the combined power of Twitter's analytics to track the progress of your Twitter strategy, to see what works and what doesn't, and to tweak your approach accordingly.

**Note:** On the move? In the Twitter mobile app, check out the Engagement feature for a quick glance at the performance of any tweet you send. From the tweet's detail page, tap "View Tweet activity" to see statistics for its views, engagement, and interactions.

# Google+ Tips:
# Plus One Your Marketing Strategy

When Google+ first launched in 2011, many assumed – probably correctly – that Google's social network was going to be the search giant's answer to Facebook. While its user base grew to well over 500 million by 2014, Google+ never really *blew up* in the way that Google might've hoped, and the site began to reshape and refocus. By late 2015, instead of a kind-of Facebook clone, Google+ was fully redesigned and re-developed to put Communities (a place for people to gather to discuss any topic they are passionate about) and Collections (a way to group posts by topic, providing an easy way for people to organize everything that they're into) front and center. In essence, Google+ is now a stripped back version of what it was, a place for people to gather to share and discuss their interests.

Despite the major changes to Google+ in 2015, Google's dominance of search on the web means that the site *can* be beneficial as a place for businesses to maintain a presence. There is no easier way to increase visibility of your content on Google search than to encourage comments, shares, and +1s (the social network's equivalent of Facebook "likes") on your Google+ account. The major caveat to this? You will have to commit to building a Google+ community against competing social networks, especially Facebook and Pinterest, neither of which have undergone such a dramatic transition. One of the biggest criticisms of the re-design is that, at present, there is no way to leave reviews on brand pages. All of that aside, if you and your audience is prepared to put in the time and effort, then the opportunity remains.

### Google+ Profile Optimization

A solid Google+ marketing strategy begins with a profile that knocks the socks off customers and prospects. Here's how to make that happen. Use the following tips to build, brand, improve search engine ranking and form relationships using Google+.

#### Get a Google+ brand page, not a profile page

As with Facebook, make sure you create a Google+ brand page for your business rather than another personal profile. Google My Business is the way for businesses, products, brands, artists, and organizations to manage their online presence with Google. When you add your business using

Google My Business, you'll automatically create a Google+ page. Customers who follow your business page can show appreciation and give feedback with post and comments, and they'll also be able to use the +1 button to endorse products and services on Google Search, Maps, or on ads.

Assuming you already have a personal Google account setup, visit https://business.google.com/manage to begin, then click the plus (+) icon from the Brand Pages tab to add a Google+ page. Enter your business name, website, and what type of page you want to create. Verify your business by SMS or voice call, and you're ready to begin.

If your business has a physical location, click the Locations tab to add details. Google+ Local pages are indexed in Google search results, and display reviews, additional details and photos of a business beside it – reviews can no longer be submitted on Google+. As a result, a well-produced Local page that includes all of your most important business information has a good chance of getting high engagement with users. Google+ Local users also receive prompts to review your business if they search for it on Google.

**Upload a compelling cover image, grab my template**

Use your Google+ cover image to express your brand image, tell people where you are, showcase new products, advertise upcoming events, or for whatever you like, really. As of November 2013, the recommended size is 1080 pixels × 608 pixels, and the smallest image size you are allowed to upload is 480 pixels × 270 pixels. By uploading the larger size, you ensure that your cover will be seen in its best light on mobiles and desktops.

**Note:** Download a Google+ cover photo template optimized for desktop and mobile screens (and lots of other great stuff) via the *Premium Content Bundle* chapter of this book.

**Add a circular profile photo or a transparent logo**

The Google+ profile image switched from a square to a circle in March 2013. Its minimum size is 250 × 250 pixels, and this will be scaled down to 104 × 104 pixels when re-sized. If you have a square company logo, you might find it tricky to get it to fit fully *inside* Google+'s profile photo circle on your page, even with the cropping and sizing tools that present themselves when you upload. The trick here is to upload your profile image as a .png file with a transparent background. Upon upload, drag the cropping edges right to the corners so that the while image will show on your

business page. If your image still doesn't look right at this stage, click on it from your profile and choose More -> Auto Enhance -> off from the menu at the top.

**Add a compelling tagline**

In your 'About' section, Google+ allows you to add a 140-character tagline to appear underneath your profile's business name. The tagline acts like an elevator pitch to visitors, will appear as the description when somebody shares your page, and as the first sentence when your Google+ page is found in Google search. Keep it short, snappy, descriptive and keyword-rich, or as a message to explain who you are and what you and your business is all about. Check out a few examples from these well-known names for inspiration: Yahoo! News - *"The official Google+ page for Yahoo! News. All stories are hand-picked by the Y! News team."*, Volkswagen: *"Take a look around, kick the tires, and ask questions to get to know our community."*, and ESPN: *"We +1 Sports"*

**Add a +1 button and Google+ badges to your website**

If you write a blog, be sure to add a +1 button widget to your posts, so that your fans can share your content on Google+ easily. Just search for "Google+ button" or grab the embed code from the following link: https://developers.google.com/+/web/+1button/ Meanwhile, the Google+ badge is the equivalent to the Facebook "Like" box in that it lets readers follow you on Google+ without leaving your site. In addition, however, it also has benefits within search results. When you embed the Google+ badge for pages on your site, an active Follow widget will show up next to your website's listing in Google search results. To install the Google+ Badge, simply search online for "Google+ Badge" or visit https://developers.google.com/+/web/badge/.

## Google+ Marketing and Content Strategy

Google+ might not have as much mainstream appeal as its competitors, but some of its features - especially discussion and conferencing tools - make it an extremely powerful destination for relationship building if the site is where your audience or prospects like to hang out. Let's take a look at some ways to maximize the impact of your approach...

**Share top content, boost your SEO**

Your Google+ audience may differ to those on Facebook and Twitter, so get to know them by asking questions, polling, sharing great and relevant content, and interacting. Posting great content on

Google+ does more than reach out to your circles and other users — it also “markets” to search engines. Anytime you post content to Google+, Google immediately indexes it, giving you faster exposure to new viewers. When you share a link to an article on your Google+ page (whether it is your own content or someone else's) write the first sentence of the post mindfully with relevant keywords and phrases. The first sentence is of a post makes up part of the title tag in search results and can affect its ranking. If you notice that your post isn’t getting much attention, try editing the text you used to see if that improves things. The longer a piece of content exists, the longer it’s in the index of Google, so as people continue to search and interact with it, it will continue to show up near the top of search results. What’s more, your content is more likely to appear in your contacts’ online searches, thanks to Google's personalized results.

**Note:** In May 2015, Google+ introduced Collections, a way to group your posts by topic - very similar to Pinterest boards. Collections can be shared publicly in your timeline, or privately. Create yours via the “Collections” tab on your page or profile, and use them as an easy way to curate and share images, links, videos – maybe as a “catalogue” of your products, a hub for breaking industry news, your newest offers, etc.

**Embed Google+ Posts on your website**

Like Twitter and Facebook, Google+ allows you to lift posts you publish and embed them onto your website or blog, which can help to give your content an extra lease of life and boost its engagement. When someone encounters the Google+ embedded post on your site, they can +1, comment, or follow you, all without leaving your site.

*How to embed a Google+ post*

1. On Google+, move your cursor over the right corner of a post to reveal a down arrow. Click the arrow to expand the post options and select "Embed post."
2. A text box containing HTML/Javascript code will appear. Copy and paste the code in the location of your article where you'd like to display the post.

**Use pictures and video for higher engagement**

Much more powerful than text are images and video, and they work incredibly well on Google+, dominating the "What's hot and recommended" section under the Explore tab. Be sure to use images to your advantage by implementing the strategies for images detailed throughout this book, and the

fact that Google+ does not crop or resize uploaded photos, so that they always retain their visual impact. In your Profile settings, make all photos public, downloadable and showing geo-location for as transparent and shareable an experience as possible. One of the benefits of sharing YouTube videos to Google+ is that when you post a YouTube video to Google+, users can view and comment on the media within their feed, and these comments *also* appear on your YouTube video. If you want to take image and video enhancement a step further, Google+'s Auto Awesome feature allows you to create GIF-style media for your page using photos, videos or both. To begin, download the Google+ mobile app, then enable Auto Awesome from the Camera Settings menu. After snapping or recording on mobile, upload the content to Google+ and shortly afterwards your animation will materialize.

**Use Mentions and hashtags**

As with Twitter and Facebook, @mentions and hashtags are important on Google+, both in tagging other users in your posts and grouping related content. To hyperlink someone's name in your posts, type "+" or "@" and then his or her name. Unlike other social networks, Google+ uses hashtags to help people *explore* tagged content rather than simply curate it. This is typified by Google+ search, which returns related hashtags and trending topics when you submit a query. As such, adding hashtags to your Google+ statuses will help people with *related* interests to find it - even if you're not connected to them - and you can also see what related hashtags appear on key searches for *your* industry, then incorporate the ideas you find into future content.

**Note:** Don't forget to include #yourbrandname in updates. If the hashtag is picked up and used by others, it has more chance of being a suggested hashtag, within search, to others. In most cases, Google+ shows hashtags in the top-right corner of statuses in the same order as they were added, so be sure to use your branded hashtag first!

**Google+ contest strategy**

Although Google+'s contest terms are strict (they begin with the rather damning sentence *"You may not run contests, sweepstakes, or other such promotion directly on Google+ or in a manner that requires use of G+ features or functionality."*, there are still several ways to leverage the platform to engage your community through giveaways without violating its promotions policy. These include:

- Asking fans to suggest ideas to improve your business, anchored with a specific hashtag to post along with submissions (the one you like the best get early access to your next product before

everyone else). Classify entries as "applications" so not to break the promotions policy.
- Asking fans to show you how they use your product or service in their everyday lives, and showcasing the best examples on your page. In this case, recognition and a feature on your page is the "prize."
- Google+ does allow you to *“display a link on Google+ to a separate site where your Promotion is hosted,”* so use this as an opportunity to promote a contest on your Google+ page (but one that is not hosted directly on the site). Read up on Google+'s full contest rules here:
http://www.google.com/+/policy/contestspolicy.html

**Hunt for prospects and brand ambassadors on Google+**
As with Twitter, you can Boolean search techniques on Google+ to find people who are talking about your brand, services, or products using the search bar at the top of the site. To begin, enter keywords, as well as hashtags that are related to your brand or niche, then filter your search by content type (posts, photos, most recent mentions, etc.) to find mentions with the most potential. Utilize searches as a means to discover potential customers (e.g. people with problems you can solve or desires you can meet) or existing brand ambassadors (people saying nice things about you), and target them to build strong, long-lasting relationships that will convert into further sharing of your content, leading them to influence the emergence of new customers and conversions further on down the line.

Hashtags are particularly useful for prospect hunting on Google+ as they allow you to deepen your investigation to find and interact with new communities and potential brand ambassadors. When you search using hashtags, the results will return Collections, Communities, People, and Pages that have mentioned, or are related to it.

**Use Google+ Communities to engage and gather feedback**
The Google+ Communities tab gives people – your customers included - a place to gather with one another and discuss almost anything, including your products and brand offering. When you create your own Community, it has the potential to become an invaluable resource as it allows you to get feedback and engage with your customers in a personal and meaningful way. What's more, all of the content posted within a Community page (whether Public or Private to invited members) is indexed by Google search. Compared to posts on your Google+ page, Google+ Community updates should be a longer and more conversational, with more detail on a specific topic or a fuller explanation of the content you are sharing; something like you might see on a web message board, for example,

complete with a question to finish in order to encourage feedback. To create a Community, simply select the Community tab in the sidebar of Google+, then click 'Create A Community' from the “Yours Tab”. Don't forget to tell your fans and customers that it exists, and encourage them to get involved.

In addition to setting up your own Community, search for Communities within your business sector or niche and actively participate in them to make connections, share expertise, and set yourself up as an authority figure. Once you are an established member of a Google+ Community, you begin to share content you have created regularly, to encourage more views and engagement with it. Carrying out this kind of self-promotion is *okay* when you are new to a Community, but you don't want to do it too often and risk coming over as spammy and unprofessional, which could eventually get you blocked from the Community altogether.

**Connect with customers in Google+ Hangouts**

Make use of Google’s free video conferencing feature, Google Hangouts, to reach and interact potential new customers and professional connections. You can use Google+ Hangouts for all manner of purposes, from product demos to interviews, to live webinars (with screen-sharing), private meetings or pretty much anything else you can think of. Hangouts are a fantastic way to connect to your peers and extend your brand's reach, and particularly valuable if your business is not in a position to invest in expensive webinar or online meeting software. While you can only have 10 participants actively on video, you can stream the video to an unlimited number of viewers on YouTube using the Hangouts on Air feature, and the video is saved to your YouTube account for anyone to view at a later date. The most successful Hangouts are those planned in advance, both content and promotion-wise. Spread the word far and wide. To set up a Google Hangout, visit http://hangouts.google.com. Choose between video, telephone, or text chat, then use the custom-generated link to invite others to join.

Take advantage of the visual nature of Hangouts to impart information, and use as many tactics as you can think of to find an audience (informing Google+ Communities, telling fans and customers on other social networks, writing a blog or email newsletter, paid promotion, etc.). Completed Hangouts can be published as a video to your YouTube channel and, if they're long, people who weren't there to watch it live may not be as compelled to stick around for the entirety of the recorded broadcast. To make their viewing experience easier, mark each distinct topic of discussion with a timestamp in the

video description. Think about timestamps as an interactive table of contents for your Hangout. Time stamps use the format of HH:MM:SS, where HH, MM, and SS, equals hours, minutes and seconds respectively. When someone clicks on the timestamp, the player automatically jumps to that location in the video. For example, typing "Discussing summer promotion 01:22:33" would create a link that, when clicked, jumps to 1 hour 22 minutes, and 33 seconds.

**Note:** As a way to grow your Hangouts On Air audience for the future, submit your recordings to the directory at Hangouts on Air Shows (http://www.hoashows.com). HOAShows is one of the more regularly updated Hangouts On Air directories, and also a great place to find other great Hangouts On Air to join. Visit the Google+ Hangouts page at https://plus.google.com/hangouts to see what Hangouts are happening live right now.

### Test, measure and apply

As with all social media, the key to finding what strategy works best for your business on Google+ is to try experimenting with different types of posts and Hangouts and seeing what your followers engage most. Measure your performance via Google Analytics, as this is key to gaining more meaningful insights into your followers' behavior towards your activity. To focus specifically on the progress of custom campaigns and referral traffic, use Goals in Google Analytics in conjunction with giving links custom URLs via the Google URL Builder, found at http://bit.ly/googleurlbuildertool

## Paid Advertising on Google+

All Google+ Pages with 1000 or more followers can take advantage of Google+ Post Ads, which enable you to display Google+ posts on relevant third party sites across the Google Display Network, i.e. on websites, not within Google search results. These posts are fully interactive, meaning anybody logged into their Google account can give a +1, comment, or share the post without leaving the page on which it is hosted. The power of Google+ Post Ads is in their social influence compared to traditional image or video ads. The theory is that someone is much more likely to engage with a Google+ Post "ad"  with lots of +1s and comments (that they can see people similar them already like), than they would clicking on an ordinary website advert. The other big benefit, of course, is that Google+ Post Ads allows people from across the web to see and interact with your Google+ content without being on the social network's website.

1. Login to your Google AdWords account and launch a new campaign. Select ‘Display Network only’.
2. Set up your campaign as you would normally for Adwords, select ‘Engagement’ under ‘Choose a campaign type to switch to’, and save.
3. On the next page, click on the +Post ad template. On the "Select a Google+ page" menu, enter your Google+ page URL.
4. From the list of Google+ posts that appear, choose the one that you would like to promote. Click ‘Customize’ to change the settings and appearance of your ad. To maximize the impact of Google+ Post Ads, use statuses with compelling images or videos, powerful content, and clear calls to action.
5. Customize the appearance of your Post Ad, then click Save.

# Pinterest Tips:
# Pin Your Way to Marketing Perfection

Pinterest allows anybody to create and organize virtual pinboards on almost any topic, then share these pins (which are most commonly images, but can also be in video form) to other Pinterest users and across the Internet via websites, blogs, and other social networks. Pins can either be uploaded directly from your computer or mobile device, or shared via a website. Since launching in March 2010, Pinterest's popularity has rocketed. When you consider that Pinterest is the second biggest driver of web traffic amongst social media sites (beaten only by Facebook), it is no surprise that thousands of businesses, including the biggest in the world, already use it as a place to showcase their brand to an audience of over 70 million users - over 75% of who browse the site on mobiles.

Pinterest users visit the site to search for, browse, and collate the things that they love and inspire them - and this is where the huge potential for businesses on Pinterest comes into play – plenty of them are shoppers. The most successful pins on Pinterest - whether posted by an individual or a business - all have a couple of things in common: they pair super images with content that solves a problem, inspires a user, offer something desirable or appeals to a hobby or an activity. Think about how these pinnable traits can be applied to your brand as a way for people to discover content about the things they love that have been pinned by you - to encourage engagement and conversation about your company culture, products and services, and to drive click-through rates to your content outside of Pinterest. For example, a seller of custom dog collars might publish pins about how to teach dog tricks, or how to make home-made dog treats.

While *some* Pinterest users visit the site with the explicit desire to find a product to purchase, others don’t, or are at a different stage of the buying

journey. Therefore, the mix of content you provide should appeal to and positively influence both types. In short, if the content you post makes someone want to buy from you, that's great (Pinterest users often create "wish list boards" as a stepping stone to purchasing products so you'll want to encourage them to add your products to these while browsing), but if it makes them laugh, smile, daydream, or think positively about you, that’s a really good sign too. Pins that aren't solely promotional, but lifestyle-based and influential by positive association with your business can be just as effective in the long run. Whether your content offers a helpful tip or motivates a user to take an action, that’s just more reason for them to repin it to one of their boards for safe keeping, and to show off to their followers via their Home screens.

No matter what your business, you should use Pinterest to inspire people with words and images. Show them their dreams and aspirations. This means creating boards not only to showcase your products and services, but others that demonstrate interesting and pinnable ideas, themes and concepts that surround it. Even if your brand isn't very visual and you don't think the site would be a very good fit, it pays to remember that Pinterest is as much (if not more) about collating and sharing images by others, as pinning your own. For example, a coffee shop may have a board about their drinks and food, but also about the latest trends in coffee culture - gadgets, music, interior design, etc. People re-pin and follow accounts on Pinterest because they appeal to their passions and needs, not because they love your latest marketing campaign! Be a resource for pinners and pin with a service mindset, not one obsessed with profit.

## Pinterest Profile Optimization

Pinterest's current layout doesn't give a whole lot of scope for customizing the look of your profile, but there's still a few key things you must to do maximize the impact of your account...

### Sign up as a business (or convert your personal Pinterest account)

In November 2012, Pinterest ramped up its support for brands by allowing them to sign up specifically as businesses (instead of just as an individual) and also allowed those brands which already had a Pinterest presence to

convert their personal accounts to ones for business. To do either, visit http://business.pinterest.com, and select the option that applies to you. Once you're signed up as a business, you'll gain access to a selection of business-specific resources, including Pinterest analytics tools, successful case studies and links to Pinterest buttons and widgets you can place on your website or blog to promote your activity on the site.

**Craft an effective username**

The first thing you'll want to get right when signing up for Pinterest is your username, which will form the basis of your Pinterest profile's URL (e.g. www.pinterest.com/yourcompanyname). You will want to publicize this URL both online and in the real world, so try to keep it short, simple and memorable. The obvious choice is your brand name, but if you have a keyword or slogan related to your company that could work better (especially if your brand's name is longer than the 15-character limit), then consider that instead. In addition, your 'First Name' and 'Last Name' should also reflect your brand, as it will appear prominently at the top of your Pinterest profile. My first and last names could be '500 Social Media' and 'Marketing Tips', for example. If your brand name is short, a last name may not be necessary.

**Use the 'About' section to your advantage**

The description you write in the About section of Pinterest appears at the top of your profile page, and acts to describe your brand and what you do. Crucially, however, it will also appear under your Pinterest URL in Google search results, so make sure to include two or three of your business' most relevant keywords. Don't overdo the length - 160 characters should be plenty. For example, mine reads: *"Andrew Macarthy, author of the #1 Amazon Web Marketing Bestseller, 500 Social Media Marketing Tips. Follow for social media tutorials and infographics!"*

**Add your website and verify it for trustworthiness**

Pretty obvious, this one. Pinterest will display a little 'globe' icon at the top of your profile, which will lead to your website when clicked. It isn't hugely prominent on the Pinterest profile page, but every little helps, so don't leave

it blank. To show people that you are a trusted source of information, Pinterest allows you to verify your website. Once verified, you’ll earn a tick next to its URL on your profile and you’ll also gain access to Pinterest web analytics. To verify your website on Pinterest, click the "Verify website" button next to the box in which you entered your URL. On the next page, follow the instructions to complete the verification process. You can verify using an HTML file or a meta tag.

**Upload a great profile image**

The two most popular types of Pinterest profile images for brands are your company's logo or, if you are the figurehead of your business, a head and shoulders shot - smiling and happy, of course. Pinterest profile images display within a rounded square on your profile page, and within circles next to pinned content and comments. To ensure your logo looks great wherever it appears on the site, upload a square 200 x 200 pixel image, but keep your business logo or face within the central "safe area," away from the corners. Download a template to help you do this (and lots of other great stuff) via the *Premium Content Bundle* chapter of this book.

**Pinterest Marketing and Content Strategy**

With your Pinterest profile page looking great, let's dive into the marketing and content strategies that will help you to exploit every opportunity that the platform has to offer.

**Optimum Pinterest pin image sizes and design**

Pinterest doesn't limit the vertical size of images pinned to its boards, but the horizontal width of pictures does max out at 735 pixels. Any image width will work, but it will be resized and displayed at a max of 735 pixels. Also keep this in mind: Pinterest only lets users pin from web pages where there is at least one image, and these images need to be a minimum size of 110 × 110 pixels big. So to encourage pinning from your own website and blog, be sure to add at least one pinnable image to every page or post. Research shows taller images encourage more re-pins on Pinterest as they work better in the way the site stacks pieces of content on top of each another in its infinitely-scrolling, narrow-blocked grid. So if you want the images on your Pinterest account and blog to be shared more on Pinterest,

focus on creating taller images. This isn't always possible, of course, but with image types such as infographics and step-by-step "how to" posts (both discussed below), there are several easy ways to implement this strategy into your Pinterest activity.

As for color and design, a year-long analysis of some half a million pins by Philadelphia-based startup, Curalate, showed that images (particularly of products) take again a plain and minimalist background tended to do better on Pinterest (in contrast to most other social networks) than those with too much in the frame. In addition, very light and very dark images were seen not to perform well - somewhere in the middle, then, is best. Pins that contained multiple dominant colors (rather than just one) were seen to receive more attention, while bold and warm colors like orange and red were seen to be repinned more than "colder" colors like blue. Lastly (and somewhat surprisingly), it found that images *without* human faces worked best on Pinterest - theorizing the reason behind this is that the site is a social network of "things," where faces are only a distraction, whereas a site like Facebook is a social network of people. While these trends may work as a starting point for formulating a Pinterest strategy, I recommend taking them with a pinch of salt and keeping a close eye on which content best works for you and your audience.

**When and what to pin - be consistent and original**

Pin regularly and consistently - a few times a day is a good target - but keep the stream going steadily, instead of weeks with nothing followed by huge bursts of activity. This strategy will maximize your exposure and prevent your followers from being flooded. As a way to give your Pinterest content more exposure, don't be afraid to pin it more than once, but *not* to the same board twice (pick one with a similar fit, or a group board) and *not* straight after the initial share - always give the original pin time to shine. *What* you post will depend on your business, but as statistics reveal that around 80% of all content on Pinterest is made up of re-pinned pins, aim to create original and inspiring pins to ensure that mean, more often than not, you are in that magic other 20%. When your pin you post includes a product, the following strategy might help: post one photo of the product on its own (e.g. with a plain white background) and another within the setting that it

will be used (e.g. luxury towels in a bathroom). Some people prefer to pin simple images for inspiration, while latter strategy gives fans a way to imagine how the product can fit into their own lives. Of course, make sure to link both pins back to the same sales page of your website.

When you pin content from others, build authority within your niche by sharing stuff that is inspirational, entertaining, accurate, up-to-date, helpful, and insightful. Other Pinterest users' boards reveal a lot about their likes, interests, wishes and desires, so use what you can find to turn your profile – in addition to an advert for your brand - as a destination that serves your audience. Click on the "Popular" link from the drop-down menu on the Pinterest home page to research what’s hot with Pinterest users right now, then work out if it is suitable for you to integrate these trends into your content strategy: make your account a more valuable resource by sharing pins from other boards that your fans will love.

**Note:** Pinterest employs a "smart feed" algorithm, which measures the quality of a pin based on the attractiveness of its image and the authority of the source website from which it is pinned - the more people who pin images on the site, the better. Pins that combine these two elements are given preferential treatment within the site's feed. Of course, it's all-but impossible to tell if your pins are being picked out for special treatment by the smart feed algorithm, but knowledge of this back-end process should encourage you to consistently share only the most awesome stuff.

**Keep board names short and simple**

In naming your boards, while you should be keyword-rich, keep the names simple and descriptive so that they can be found easily in Pinterest's search - but short enough so that the names do not trail off when viewed on your profile. Each of your board names can have up to 30 or so characters (including spaces) before being cut off when viewed on your profile page - the remaining characters can be seen when the board is clicked on. In Pinterest search, meanwhile, the cut-off point is even shorter, at around 20 characters. If your board name is more than 20 characters long, try to put the most relevant keywords at the beginning so that you give it the best chance of being discovered. Your Pinterest board name will become part of

its URL, i.e. www.pinterest.com/your-board-name, (important for SEO), so choose wisely.

**Note:** Many people turn to Pinterest as a search engine (opting for it over Google, even, for certain searches), so approaching the setup of your content on the site with an SEO mindset is important - in board names, pin names and descriptions, and even the file name of your images (more on these shortly).

**When creating boards, keep "niche" in mind**
If you have spent time on Pinterest, you might have noticed that some of the biggest brands on the site have created *loads* of pinboards; each very specific in its contents. While flooding your profile with pins might seem counter-intuitive from the "less is more" school of thought, in fact, it could pay dividends. Here's why: because people use Pinterest search a lot to find content (or come across it via a web search), creating highly targeted boards gives your pins a better chance of being found and viewed. For example, a board called "Wedding Inspiration" is very general - there are thousands all named the same and the chances of yours being found if you are just starting off as, say, a wedding accessories vendor, are slim. However, a board called "Pink Wedding Dresses 2014," although less likely to be searched for, has *much* less competition, and therefore gives it a better chance of being discovered in search results. So when you create your Pinterest boards, think unique, specific and niche, and target the content and keywords that you think your audience will be looking for.

**Select an attractive board cover**
One pin on each of your Pinterest boards will be used as the board cover. This image should be eye-catching, attractive and represent the board as a whole, on your profile and in search results. In short, your board cover should appeal to users enough to make them want to click and explore its contents in full. To select a pin as your board cover, hover over the board in question on your profile and click the 'Change Cover' button. Use the arrows to find the pin you want to use as your board cover. When selecting your board cover image, you can reposition the image to have the best part featured on the cover. Click Save Changes to apply the change.

**Rearrange your Pinterest boards by importance**

Pinterest gives you the option to rearrange your boards. All you need to do from your profile page is click, hold and drag boards into their optimum positions. The idea here is to shift your most important boards onto the first couple of rows - especially those 'above the fold', i.e. those boards visible onscreen before a user has to scroll down to see more. Think about which of your boards you want to feature most prominently - based on seasonal promotions, holidays, current trends, etc. and place them in the prime real estate areas of your Pinterest profile.

**Create Secret Boards to collate pins and plan marketing**

Pinterest's 'Secret Boards' feature allows you to create an unlimited number of hidden boards that can be made public at any time in the future. One simple and effective use for Secret Boards is related to seasonal campaigns, e.g. Valentine’s Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc. Slowly build up your campaign’s themed Secret Board throughout the year and when the time comes, you’ll be well prepared to make it public with a wealth of content which you can continue to add to during the promotional period. To create a Secret Board, choose the option at the bottom of your profile page; or, when creating a board from the 'Add' menu, make sure to switch the Secret Board slider to 'On'.

**Drive repins and web traffic with effective pin descriptions**

As Pinterest is one of the world's biggest drivers of traffic through to websites, crafting effective pin descriptions is essential to giving your content the best chance possible of being discovered when a user searches the site. With the roll out of Pinterest's Guided Search in April 2014 (a tool that offers instant keyword suggestions and inspiration to help inspire users into finding exactly what they want), optimizing your pin descriptions is more important than ever. My primary advice is to write pin descriptions as a useful and searchable piece of information, including specific and distinct keywords that reflect the pin's content and your business, e.g. *"red, V-neck striped red sweater from Karen's Apparel, Denver"* is much better than just *"wool sweater"*. If the pin demands it, descriptions that mention how the subject of the pin provides value work better than straight explanations, so

put yourself into the mind of a customer and write with what they might want to know. For example, rather than saying something like *"We're now selling these diamond earrings, let us know what you think of them,"* a more effective description might read *"The way that the light bounces off these beautiful diamond earrings is mesmerizing, and they'd go well with any kind of outfit made for a night out on the town."* Some research has shown that including a call to action in your pin description also helps to encourage clicks, so you may want to experiment with some, too.

Unlike other social networks where shorter copy is king, slightly longer descriptions work better on Pinterest; just enough to spark a user's curiosity so that they will feel compelled to click through to your website for more information. Oh, and just before you publish your pin, add a full URL back to the content within the description to boost its SEO. Always use the full URL, because Pinterest has a habit of marking shortened URLs (bit.ly, tinyurl, etc.) as spam. To encourage repinning (so that your pins are spread organically to a greater audience throughout the site), your description should also help people see the value of a pin and explain why they might want to repin it to one of their own boards. As for hashtags, like with Twitter, don't go overboard - one or two are great; three is probably the maximum you want to consider before things start to look a bit spammy. Another good idea for your brand image and marketing (and something you can compound using other social networks and real-world efforts) is to create a hashtag specific to your brand, e.g. the name of your company or a short slogan (e.g. #mcdonalds or #imlovinit). Pepper this unique hashtag throughout your Pinterest activity and encourage your fans to do the same.

**Modify blog image titles for optimum pinning from readers**

The title you give an image when publishing it on your blog (that's the pop-up message you see when you hover your mouse cursor over it) is the text that Pinterest lifts to use as a pin's description when that image is pinned by a blog reader. So, if you encourage blog readers to pin content from your site, make sure that the image title (and subsequent pin description) appears as you would like it to when it lands on Pinterest. I often pin from websites where this hasn't been done, and if I'm not in the mood to optimize someone

else's pin for them so that it doesn't look bad on my profile, then I'll just close the window and not bother. Don't let your readers do this to you!

**Install the ‘Pin It’ bookmarklet and 'Pin It' buttons**

The Pin It bookmarklet lets you grab an image or video from any website and pin it to one of your boards in an instant. Installing this ensures that you can quickly and easily pin top content to your boards as soon as you find it. When you visit a website and click 'Pin It' on a page where there is an image you want to pin (displayed in your browser's bookmarks bar), the bookmarklet will display thumbnails of all 'pinnable' images on that page. Simply select the one you want to share, choose the correct board, enter a description, and hit 'Pin It'. Make sure that you install a Pinterest button on your blog, too (sit it beside the Facebook "Like" and "Tweet" buttons above, below, or to the side of each blog post. This strategy that ensures that your best images are made as easy for Pinterest users (who don't have the "Pin It" Bookmarklet at least) to share as possible. Pinterest also has several choices of 'Follow' buttons, profile preview, and board preview widgets that you can display on your website to show off your Pinterest presence to potential fans. Choose the ones that take your fancy and embed them on your website where people will see them. There are simple step-by-step instructions for choosing and installing all of these widgets at the following address: http://pinterest.com/about/goodies/

On a related note (and this a strategy that will come into play once you are an established player on Pinterest), use your most popular pins as an opportunity to help drive sales outside of the social network, whether in real-life or on your website. Case in point is the retailer Target: it highlights various in-store items with a "popular on Pinterest" card to catch the eye of shoppers (particularly if they are Pinterest users), and it also has a section of its website - the Awesome Shop - dedicated to its most pinned content for visitors to explore. The idea is that when someone sees that a particular item is popular on Pinterest *and* that is has been given the seal of approval by their peers, the just might be encouraged to invest as well.

**Set up Rich Pins for greater visibility, and Buyable Pins for products**

In May 2013, Pinterest began to roll out Rich Pins, a way to make pins more useful and engaging. With Rich Pins enabled, you'll be able to feature things like the price and availability of a product, recipe details, maps, etc. on top of and underneath relevant pins. Rich Pins update this information automatically and display it below a pin in real time by lifting data from your website. To get started with Rich Pins, you’ll need to prep your website with meta tags, test out the function and apply to get them on Pinterest. Getting Rich Pins to work right requires some coding and technical knowhow, so if you're unsure what terms like "oEmbed" and "semantic markup" mean, I recommend getting together with your web developer for a chat and pointing him or her to http://business.pinterest.com/rich-pins/ for more info. Once you overcome the slight technical hurdle, there are plenty of reasons to use Rich Pins including the likelihood of increased likes, repins, web traffic, and sales - definitely worth the effort!

Where Rich Pins for products are concerned, the item in question will also be automatically added Pinterest's Gift category feed (http://www.pinterest.com/gifts/). Pinterest's own research shows that Product Pins get higher click-through rates than regular pins and make your brand more visible on the site. What's more, users will receive an email notification if Product Pins they’ve saved drop in price, encouraging them to buy right there, particularly if they weren't quite ready to at the higher price. In addition, Pinterest has introduced Buyable Pins – adorned with a blue “Buy It” button, they allow people to buy products without ever leaving Pinterest. Shopify and Demandware users can integrate Buyable Pins now, while it’ll roll out to everyone else in the coming future. With Pinterest being a hub for consumers’ wish lists and a destination to simply window shop, Buyable Pins offer a fantastic opportunity to businesses, especially those touting impulse buys.

**Overlay text on your images to grab attention and encourage interaction**

Most Pinterest users scan the site's content and don’t take the time to read the descriptions or comments associated with an image - that is unless the image grabs their attention first! Images overlaid with easy-to-read, bold

text do that particularly well in drawing people's attention, clarifying the message of the pin, and encouraging interaction with a call to action. Us e free services such as Pinwords (http://www.pinwords.com/) and PicMonkey (http://www.picmonkey.com) to easily this result easily and stylishly. After all, while it's great to get repins and comments on your pins, one of your main goals is surely to drive traffic *off* Pinterest onto an external website.

**Share videos and presentations; decide between in-feed or image-based pins**

Pinned videos from sites including YouTube and Vimeo will play directly within the Pinterest feed, so if videos are part of your marketing strategy, make sure your customers know about them via the site. For example, I have separate video boards that showcase my social media marketing tutorials for Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and others. Another effective idea is to use videos as a way to demonstrate your products in use, either in isolation or – even better – in a real life setting. You could also create a separate video board where you pin videos from Pinterest and around the web that complement yours, or invite others to pin their content there.

To make sure your pinned videos has as much visual impact on the site as possible, make use of YouTube and Vimeo's custom thumbnail features. The thumbnail you choose will act as the image that represents your video pin, so make it compelling - take a look at the custom thumbnail tips in the YouTube Tips chapter for more specific advice on this. In addition, add the word “video” to the beginning of the pin's description to grab attention.

**Note:** If you pin a video from a page on your website on which the video is embedded (rather than a youtube.com address, for example), Pinterest will show the directly-playable YouTube video but the link and description associated with that pin will be the URL and page name on your site respectively, so this will definitely help with Pinterest and web search engine optimization. As well as videos, Pinterest also supports the embedding of Slideshare presentations. If you use the "Share on Pinterest" option underneath a slideshow on Slideshare, the content in question will appear on Pinterest with a small "Play" button on top of the pinned image.

When this is clicked, the pin opens up on its own page and users can view the whole presentation directly on the site. Similar to video content, you might want to add the words "slideshow" or "presentation" into the pin description to make clear what's on offer.

When you share a video or Slideshare presentation to Pinterest, the video thumbnail and first slide image respectively will represent the pin - and, to be truthful, it's not that big and visually impacting.  To improve upon this situation (and if you'd prefer to use videos or presentations as a way to drive traffic to your website from Pinterest rather than having them play directly on the site), do this: instead of pinning the media directly from YouTube, Vimeo, or Slideshare, create a separate pinnable image that links to the video or presentation (embedded on your website) and pin that instead. The advantage of this method is that you have full control over the dimensions of the pinned image, meaning that you can format it to be taller than thinner, a composition that is often more engaging than the fixed short and wide dimensions of directly-pinned media. Custom images could simply be a much larger version of the video or slideshow's title, or - if you've got more time - a tall infographic-style image that summarizes some of the content's main points and encourages people to click through to get the information in full.  To make it obvious that a pin contains interactive content behind it - and encourage users to click - add a "play" triangle symbol over your custom pin image. Yes, the downside here is that the video or presentation you link to won't play within the Pinterest feed, but chances are that the people who willingly make the extra click to view the video or presentation on your website without distractions, are the kind that will be most valuable to your business (and more likely to convert) in the long run.

**Note:** While I recommend pin boards made exclusively to draw attention to your video and presentations, don't be afraid to repin this content (whether you pinned it directly or as a separate image) to other relevant boards. For example, a company that sells handmade soaps could pin a video showing its manufacturing process to its dedicated video board, *plus* a board that relates to the specific product that is being made, e.g. *Winter Warmer Handmade Soaps*.

**Interact, mention, and share your best content to community boards.**
Pinterest allows you to mention other users in a comment by typing @username. People love knowing you like their content, so be sure to let them know. Create a seed-list of loyal people you can count on to re-pin your content, and @tag them in your pins to get them involved. In addition, consider using a service like PinGroupie (http://pingroupie.com/) to find popular community boards, and share your best content to them.

**Encourage interaction and drive interest by adding guest pinners**
Selectively encourage brand ambassadors and influencers to pin to your Pinterest profile on a group board (keep an eye on notifications for people who repin your content a lot, or draw them in from other social networks). Pinterest's messaging function (launched via the "+" icon at the bottom of the site) is a useful way to engage with your most loyal and trusted followers, and invite them to pin with you. Personalize the message to make the individual feel special, and to let them know why they were chosen, what you want them to do, and what's in it for them (money off vouchers, exclusive access to new products, etc.). The beauty of this strategy is that when an invited individual pins to your board, their activity shows up in both your followers' *and their* followers' feeds. If the guest pinner in question is popular on the site, you can just imagine the potential for increased interest in your brand. Be picky about the people you invite, restrict just one or two people to any one board so that they feel special, and give them as much creative freedom as you are happy to allow. To add a guest pinner, enter their username in the 'Add another pinner' box when creating a new board.

**See who's sharing your content, and encourage new fans**
Want to see who and what content Pinterest users are grabbing from your website? Use the URL http://pinterest.com/source/*[yourpinterestusername]* to see what's been shared from your website or blog. You can then use this information to see what types of content is most popular with your follow base, and go on to optimize your output as a result.

The above tip will reveal who is sharing your Pinterest content on the site, but one clever little way to encourage pressed-for-time people to visit your boards when they aren't so busy is the "Pin it for later" technique. When sharing your Pinterest post in a status update on Facebook, Twitter, in an email newsletter, etc., copy the URL of the pin and mark it as a link to click to "Pin for later," empowering your audience to bookmark content that interests them. On a similar note, try featuring some of your top pins (screenshot images of them and add a click-through link) in your email newsletter, encouraging the Pinterest fans on your list to join you on the site.

**Pinterest Board Ideas for Business**

*VIP board to feature customers*

Ask fans of your brand to pin pictures of themselves with their favorite product of yours, and to tag you in the description. You can re-pin those photos onto a VIP board on your profile. Not only is this a great way to play to the 'vanity' of your fans (they love to be featured on your boards), but it also serves to spread the word of your brand around the social network.

*Products and services board, give sneak peeks*

While you should never use Pinterest as a way to spam your customers with marketing pins, a couple of boards dedicated to your products and services won't harm, particularly as Pinterest is such a *huge* driver of sales and web traffic. Fashion brands on Pinterest are experts at this strategy, posting new boards to reflect the changing season's must-have looks and provide exclusive sneak peeks to its fans. A study by Vision Critical for the clothing brand J. Crew found that nearly a quarter (21%) of Pinterest users visited the store to buy an item they liked or pinned from its boards. The same survey revealed that a whopping 80% tended to buy an item within three weeks of pinning it. To boost this statistic even further, J. Crew tempts customers with pin descriptions like *"Love what you see? Our Very Personal Stylist team can help you pre-order this look before it becomes available on Wednesday August 21.) Call or email..."*

*Current campaigns board*

Build a board specifically for posting information about your latest marketing campaigns, offers and deals, so that your customers can find them all in one place, e.g. Summer Offers, 25% Off Sale, etc. Make sure that you rearrange your boards to make this one appear near the top of your profile, so that these limited-time deals are given as much visibility as possible.

*Meet-the-team board*
Pinterest pins provide the perfect opportunity for your customers to get to know you and your staff better. Take individual photos of your employees and use the title and description to tell your customers who they are and what they do; add other interesting snippets of information, e.g. their hobbies, favorite movie or why they love working for you! In essence, take customers behind the scenes, to help them connect more closely with you and your brand.

*Company history board*
Take inspiration from Facebook's Milestones feature and use pins to document the history of your business. Customers love to indulge in the history and heritage of their favorite brands, and Pinterest provides the perfect opportunity to let them do this. Showing that your company has a history improves your credibility; showing your growth and new products can imply core growth, stability and trustworthiness. Examples of stuff you can feature as part of your history include storefront or website changes, product package revisions through the years - and even pictures of you in your younger days!

*Tutorials and how-to board*
In such a creative space as Pinterest, putting together tutorials and how-to videos related to your business or industry works really well. In a step-by-step process, use one pinned picture, GIF, or video per step to create an easy-to-follow chain of instructions and increase your exposure at the same time. Alternatively (and given the evidence that taller images get more re-pins), create a single tall image made up of several smaller step-by-step photos and instructions.

*Reviews and recommendations board*
A great number of people use Pinterest to get shopping inspiration, and associate themselves with brands and retailers. Write up reviews and recommendations for products that people want and pin them to a board with a title such as 'Products We Love', whether the items inside are yours or not. Even if they aren't yours - good karma reciprocates good karma on Pinterest, and you'll see a long-term positive trend if you feature and tag others in this kind of way.

*Showcase your blog and website*
Create a board specifically to pin blog posts and articles that you have created on your website - it helps to drive traffic to your content. Also use these boards to highlight and re-purpose old (but still great) blog posts that were posted before you joined the site.

**Utilize Place Pins Boards**
In November 2013, Pinterest rolled Place Pins – a way for users to geotag their activity on the site. Place Pin boards allow users to see exactly where the subject of a Pin was snapped or created, and also include extra information like an address and phone number so that anyone can easily find you, and even get directions. To create a Place Pin board, select "Add a map" when you create a new board, or edit an existing board’s settings to add one. Then, click on each pin individually to search for a location and add it to the board's map. Place Pins have numerous uses that include: marking bricks and mortar locations or an upcoming event, showing off where your clients are around the country or world (to impress with your geographical influence), to pin ideas for your customers based on location (e.g. showing how your product or service adapts to or is used in different places), or as part of a contest (e.g. ask customers to pin photos of themselves using their product or service wherever they are in the world, and offer a prize to the one that is the most imaginative, beautifully shot, farthest away, etc.).

**Create and share infographics**
Infographics are a hugely popular way to share information on the web, and they look fantastic in Pinterest's vertical layout. Consider creating your own

infographics to share with customers (don't forget to plug your business at the bottom of them). Also repin the best infographics you find on Pinterest or around the web, as long as they are relevant and interesting to your audience. I created a Pinterest board dedicated to social media infographics and its content is amongst my most viewed and re-pinned.

**Pinterest contest strategy**

Like other social media outlets, Pinterest is a great way to hold contests to increase engagement and loyalty. The easier your contest is to enter, the simpler it is to setup and the more entries you are likely to receive. Examples include asking entrants to pin images from your business website to enter, asking fans to upload original images of their favorite products from your brand (either to their own board or one a brand new one with a name that you decide), or asking them to pin creations they have made by using one of your products (for example, a sausage company could ask participants to pin images and recipes of meals they have concocted in the kitchen). For a full rundown on the Dos and Don'ts of Pinterest contests and how to comply with its terms of service, visit this page: http://business.pinterest.com/logos-and-marketing-guidelines/

**Run an offer on Pinterest**

People love offers - anything with the word ‘free’, ‘discount’ or ‘giveaway’ in it - and the visual nature of Pinterest is a great way to get them noticed. Either pin images from your website and add a description of the offer featured there, or upload a pin direct to the site for an 'exclusive to Pinterest followers' offer. And how about getting even fancier, with something like a 'pin it to unlock' campaign? Upload a pin detailing a special offer and tell your followers it will only run once the image has been re-pinned 'X' number of times, encouraging them to like, comment, and re-pin to unlock it!

**Use Facebook to promote your Pinterest content**

On your Facebook fan page, show images of your favorite pins to your fans. Provide a mixture of links, fun status updates and your specific boards. Be sure to include the URL to the pins in question, so that Facebook fans are

encouraged to click through to view, re-pin and follow. One of the most effective ways I use this technique is with infographics. For example, let's assume the pinned infographic is called '10 Ways to Delight Your Blog Readers'. I will copy the image into a photo editor and crop it to show only the first of the ten ways. I'll then upload and post this shortened image to Facebook, along with a post that describes the infographic and tells fans to click through to Pinterest, at the link provided, if they want to see the other nine points.

**Pinterest analytics strategy**
Pinterest's built-in analytics tool (accessed via the drop-down menu on your profile page or directly at https://analytics.pinterest.com/) provides a top-down statistical overview of how often content is being pinned from your website, how many times your pins are re-pinned, how many people are seeing your pins each day, how many are clicking on them, which devices they're accessing your content on, and who these people are (based on location, gender, interests, and languages spoken). You can also glance at the most recent, most repinned, and most clicked content, but click the "Export data" button to generate a spreadsheet that will give a complete breakdown of likes, comments and repins of each post. Use the data to compare your pin and board stats, learn about your audience, spot trends, and adapt your strategy to capitalize on what most resonates with the people who engage with your Pinterest content.

## Advertising on Pinterest – Promoted Pins

Promoted Pins are a way for you to expand the organic reach of pins that you want more of your audience to see. They appear in regular search results and category feeds, and are marked with a "Promoted Pin" label. When you pay to promote a pin, you only pay for the initial "boost." Any other engagement or traffic that is generated via comments or re-pins (even after the promotion ends) is all free, so, done right, they can be a very cost-effective way of marketing your content and driving your business goals.

1. To get started, visit http://ads.pinterest.com and click Promote. You can choose to promote an existing pin (search by name or

URL), pin an image from your website, or upload a new piece of content from your computer.

2. Choose relevant keyword terms to describe your pin and help your target audience find it. Pinterest will suggest related terms, which you can include if you wish, and the site recommends that you add at least 30 terms - a mixture of broad and specific - to increase the reach of your Promoted Pin. When deciding upon which keywords to target with Promoted Pins, use Pinterest's Guided Search to help you determine what type of keywords people are using to find information about your service or product. In addition, Pinterest ads' robust keyword search tool can be used as a powerful generator of ideas regarding subjects to base your promotion around.
3. Target your pin to your audience by location, language, device, and gender. As you choose, Pinterest will show you an estimate of the impressions that your Promoted Pin will receive on a weekly basis.
4. Choose a CPC (cost-per-click) and daily campaign budget. You only pay when someone clicks through to your website. Select when you want your campaign to begin and end (or just keep it rolling).
5. Click Promote Your Pin to finish. Within the Pinterest ads dashboard, use the conversion tracking tools to see how many clicks, engagements, and views your Promoted Pin has received. Combine this data with Pinterest analytics to see how your Promoted Pins perform, and adjust your existing or future campaigns to work on improving your results.

*Promoted Pins Best Practices*
The most successful Promoted Pins are informative, inspirational and useful - not overly promotional. Their branding and logos compliment (not dominate) the pin; they include soft call-to-actions in an image's text overlay and in the description (e.g. "Up to 40% off," "Shop our sale," "Free shipping") - not price; and their descriptions are detailed. The copy should spotlight the most compelling aspects of the pin, and tease what a user can gain from clicking through. Multi-product images can also perform well, as

they cater to different tastes, e.g. showing off several products from one range rather than just one.

# LinkedIn Tips:
# Network Like Clockwork

LinkedIn is the web's central hub for professionals and businesses to connect and market their brand, expertise, and skills to the world. As an individual on LinkedIn, you can - among other things - use the site to establish a professional profile and control one of the top search results for your name, build a broad network of professional connections whose knowledge you can tap into, and discover new business opportunities. A LinkedIn Company Page is a place for companies to provide more information about themselves, their products and services, job opportunities, and where they can share expert insights. Any LinkedIn user can follow a company that has set up a Company Page to receive and interact with updates on their home page, which allows you a chance to drive awareness of you and your brand. Research by LinkedIn has revealed that you only need 100-200 followers of your Company Page to reach the tipping point to start making an impact and driving engagement, so it's well worth making sure both it and your personal profile is doing the best job it can.

**Note:** Many of this chapter's tips are prefixed with either "Personal Profile" or "Company Pages," and some with both. This will help you tell where the advice given is best applied. Where there is no prefix, the tip is a more general hint about one of LinkedIn's many features.

## LinkedIn Profile Optimization

### Personal Profile and Company Page: Fill them in completely

Make sure you fill out all of the sections on your LinkedIn profiles, and that you set up both a personal LinkedIn profile for you individually, and one that is specifically for your business - a LinkedIn Company Page. Either page might be the first port of call for a potential client, so you'll want to make a good first impression.

*Important personal profile sections*
The Description section is one of the most important of your personal LinkedIn profile, as you can really expand upon your current and past roles and responsibilities, and your achievements. It's also a really good place for you to drop in some relevant keywords, which will aid your chances of appearing higher in LinkedIn's search. With a quick glance at your personal profile, visitors will know what you’ve done at each of your jobs, can learn more about you and determine whether you’re someone they want to connect with to foster a new professional relationship. To make a prospect's job even easier, use short paragraphs or bullet-pointed lists. If you use bullets, start your sentences with verbs (past tense verbs for past positions, present tense verbs for present positions). Rather than state what you did, tell people what you accomplished or how you helped the business progress. The more concrete and quantifiable you can be here, the better. The Summary section as is also crucial, as it is your first opportunity to write an overview or statement about who you are and what you can offer your audience, and a chance to show what makes you unique and desirable to prospective connections. Make sure your Summary expresses who you are *as a person*. Your company website or LinkedIn Company Page is there to tell people about your company, but your personal profile is there for LinkedIn users to learn more about you!

*How to Create A Company Page*
To add a Company Page, sign in to LinkedIn as a personal user and click on the "Companies" link in the bar at the top of the site. From here, click the 'Add A Company' button, which is positioned at the top of the page on the right-hand side. There are a few small milestones you have to reach, and a few simple administrative technicalities to overcome before LinkedIn will allow you to get started, but it won't take you long before you're ready to rock.

**Note**: You must have a company email address, e.g. yourname@yourcompany.com, in order to create a LinkedIn Company Page. You are not permitted to use an address with a domain such as Outlook or Gmail.

Once your Company Page is created, you can begin to flesh it out with details about your location, size, contact details, industry, etc. by clicking Edit at the top-right hand corner of your company's Home tab.

*Important Company Page sections*
Obviously, the 'Company Description' section is very important. Write a high-level overview of your business that showcases your brand and tells people what makes you unique. It is the perfect place to start spreading your message and opening up avenues of conversation with potential partners. The 'Specialties' section of your Company Page overview is also very powerful. Here, enter relevant keywords about who you are and what you do, so that there is a greater chance that you'll be found more often in a LinkedIn search.

**Create Showcase Pages for specific products or services**
In November 2013, LinkedIn introduced Showcase Pages, a dynamic replacement for the old Company Page "Product and Services" tabs, which were removed from the site in April 2014. Showcase Pages aren't the same as Company Pages, and they don't have all of the same features. Think of Showcase Pages as children to the parent Company Page: a way to extend your LinkedIn presence by posting regular updates about a *specific* product, service, department, business initiative, etc. rather than your business as a whole, and a place where you can share unique and specific aspects of your brand to a more concentrated and distinct audience. For example, Microsoft has a main Company Page, but several Showcase Pages for products and services Office and Microsoft Training and Certification.

Users can follow and receive updates from Showcase Pages in the same way as any Company Page, so keep the top-notch content flowing with images, links, videos, freebies, etc. If an update appeals to both your wider fan base via your main Company Page *and* the more niche audience of a Showcase Page, don't be afraid to re-purpose it. Showcase Pages have their own unique URL for easy sharing, and also feature on the right-hand side of your Company Page. After identifying an area (or areas - you can create up to 10 Showcase Pages) of your business for which a Showcase Page would be useful, here's how you create one:

*How to create a Showcase Page:*
1. Click the down arrow next to the blue Edit button on the Company Page, and select "Create a Showcase Page."
2. Enter the new Page's name and assign administrators.
3. Click Create.

*Optimum Showcase Page branding image sizes:*
Hero (cover) image: Minimum 974 x 330 pixels.
Logo: 100 x 60 pixels.
Square logo: 50 x 50 pixels.

**Note:** Download a Showcase page cover photo template optimized for desktop and mobile screens (and lots of other great stuff) via the *Premium Content Bundle* chapter of this book.

**Personal Profile and Company Pages: add a profile photo, logo and banner images**
On your personal profile, add a recent photo to humanize it - quite a few people don't, to their own detriment. LinkedIn profile pics are 200 × 200 pixels in size. Keep it smart, though - don't post a photo on your LinkedIn profile of you in your bathing suit on the beach - a head and shoulders shot of you looking smart and presentable is best. And as with your profile information, keep your profile photo updated with your changing look - hairstyles, glasses, wardrobe, etc. This will ensure that you are recognizable at meetings, conferences and events at which you and your LinkedIn connections attend!

LinkedIn started to roll out Facebook-style cover photos for personal profiles in the summer of 2014. The recommended size for background photos is 1400 x 425 pixels. Use this space to be showcase your brand personality, help people understand who you are, what you do and how you can help them - ideas include a photo of you, your contact details (email, phone, Twitter handle, etc.) and a call to action. The default landing tab for your Company Page on LinkedIn is the Home tab, and this is where your company logo and banner image will appear. It's very similar to how your

Facebook cover image looks, but the size is different. The optimum size for a LinkedIn cover image is 646 × 222 pixels; the profile photo remains a square, but this time it is shrunk to 50 × 50 pixels. Use this space to illustrate and extend your unique branding message.

**Note:** Download Personal and Company page cover photo templates optimized for desktop and mobile screens (and lots of other great stuff) via the *Premium Content Bundle* chapter of this book.

**Personal Profile: Make it client-facing**
The biggest mistake a lot of LinkedIn users do is to treat their personal profile as a virtual résumé. The truth is that most potential connections that come across you are not interested in seeing where you went to school, what your first job was, or what tasks you achieve. At the very least, the Summary - at the top of your profile - should tell visitors who you are, what you do, who you help, how you can help *them*, and what others say about you (short, complementary quote).

**Personal Profile: craft a catchy headline**
Your personal LinkedIn profile headline is the first piece of information a potential connection will see about you, so make it catchy and individual. Something generic like "Retail Manager" is not enough - there are millions of those on LinkedIn. Think about what differentiates you, what makes you special and what you want to be known for. Craft a headline to match. At the time of writing, my headline reads: Andrew Macarthy - Social Media Consultant, Bestselling Social Media Author, Content Curator. Another quick trick is to update your personal profile headline every couple of months, which seems to help boost views within search, and ensures your profile's keywords will be found by different people typing different search terms.

**Note:** If you're feeling sneaky, you can also add your email address in your headline so that people can contact you directly, without having to go through LinkedIn, which often won't let you e-mail someone without having connected first - although this *can* look a little unprofessional. The more people who view your profile, the more likely a percentage of those

visitors will click through to your (or your company's) website or blog to learn more about you and maybe encourage them to connect. In summary, lure prospects in with a thoroughly filled out headline and page, and win them with your expertise.

**Personal Profile: Grab a vanity URL**
When you edit your LinkedIn profile, go to the "public profile" section to create your LinkedIn URL of choice. As with other social networks, this will make directing potential clients to a memorable address that much easier.

**Personal Profile: Optimize your location**
Entering your location on LinkedIn might not be *quite* as obvious as it first seems. For example, I have spent a lot of time in Berwyn, IL, a city that is just a stone's throw from the much bigger and better-known Chicago - so let's pretend for a moment that I live in Berwyn. If a prospect scouring LinkedIn was in charge of finding people from the Chicagoland area, listing my location as Chicago will help me appear in more search results (if filtered by location), and I will also be seen as someone "local" to others within my target market. Think about how this tactic might apply to your location and adjust your profile accordingly.

**Personal Profile: showcase your Achievements**
LinkedIn allows users to add projects, languages, publications, awards, test scores, courses, patents, certifications and volunteering carried out to your profile. As you can imagine if you put yourself in the shoes of a potential connection, this will add a lot of value to your profile, both in business terms and showing you off as a well-rounded individual. So if you have these details to add, make sure you do so.

**Personal Profile: Add rich visual content like images and presentations**
Visual content like images, videos, infographics and even Slideshare presentations can be used to make your LinkedIn profile more eye-catching, whilst showcasing your achievements, brands that you have worked with and provided benefit to, your research, and skills at the same time. Examples of great content to feature includes popular blog posts,

screenshots of customer testimonials (like a tweet or product review), or a video of an impressive speech you gave at a conference. Simply click to edit your profile, click the "+" icon next to any job position, then choose to upload a file or share a link. Where Slideshare is concerned, you can share an uploaded presentations direct to your LinkedIn profile's Summary section via the "Add to profile" option, which appears when you hover over a presentation in the "My Uploads" section of Slideshare. The same option will be present when you upload new slideshows.

**Personal Profile and Company Pages: insert bullet points to make your pages more readable**

If you've filled out your LinkedIn profile in full, you've probably got quite a lot of text on there, some of which (achievements, responsibilities, etc.) would be *so* much easier for prospects to read in a bulleted list. As it happens, you *can* insert bullet points into your LinkedIn profile sections, but it's not something LinkedIn shouts about. Here's how:

1. Sign into LinkedIn and click "Edit Profile" at the top of your profile page.
2. Scroll to the section of the profile where you want to add bullet points and click the pencil icon.
3. Place your cursor at the beginning of the line where you want to add a bullet point, and type "•" (without the speech marks). Do this for as many lines as you wish, then click Save.
4. You're done, and your text should be bulleted. If you ever return to edit a section that you have added bullets to, the "•" code will not be visible; it is replaced with a single space at the beginning of a line. To remove the bullet, delete this space and click Save.

**Personal Profile and Company Pages: Write for LinkedIn SEO, use relevant keywords**

When you optimize your LinkedIn pages with relevant keywords to you, your expertise and your business, it stands a chance of ranking higher in Google and LinkedIn search. Don't make it too obvious by writing in an unnatural style that renders it blatant to readers that you are trying to crunch in as many keywords as possible - but be aware that you'll want to include

them nonetheless. Whenever you gain new skills and expertise, don't forget to add these into your profile too. LinkedIn allows you to add up to 50 skills, so fill in as many as you can.

The keywords you use should be a mix - from broad terms to those that are very specific, as you never know which search terms someone will be using to potentially find you. Where you put these keywords matters, too - research by blogging4jobs.com revealed that your name, headline, company name, job title, and skills keywords rank the highest. Another important place to use keywords on your personal LinkedIn profile is in the job experience section, both for your current and past positions. Use lots of detail, going into the same amount of depth that you would on your resume about the role you did, the responsibilities you had and the goals you achieved. Don't be afraid to brag a bit!

**Personal Profile: re-order job positions by importance**
LinkedIn will automatically order your job positions in chronological order, but you can override this and arrange them by importance to you (and potential connections) by clicking on the up and down arrow icon next to any position and then dragging and dropping it into whatever order you like.

## LinkedIn Marketing and Content Strategy

**Personal Profile: promote your company through employee profiles**
Getting all employees on board with your LinkedIn strategy is crucial to its success, as it helps to create an extended network that amplifies your company's standing and influence on the site. Ask your employees to create their own LinkedIn accounts and to list your company as their employer. If necessary, provide them with training on how to build a great LinkedIn Profile (shameless plug: check out my book, *How to Build the Ultimate LinkedIn Profile in Under an Hour*, for a step-by-step guide), and pass on the benefits that growing their own professional network can provide.

Rather than being scared that employee profiles will make them a target for headhunters from rival firms, see them as reflecting extremely well on your

business instead. It is likely that many of your employees already have LinkedIn accounts and, sadly, there isn't much you can do to stop them moving on if they decide to - just focus on the positives.

**Personal Profile: follow other companies**

Company follows make it possible for you to keep your eye on key events happening at companies you're interested in, handy for keeping tabs on the opposition and for your own inspiration. You can follow or stop following a company from its Company Page.

*To follow a company:*

1. Click Companies at the top of your homepage.
2. Search for a company.
3. Click Follow in the upper right of the company's Home page.

*To stop following a company:*

1. Click Profile at the top of your homepage and scroll down to the Following box on your profile.
2. In the Companies section, move your cursor over the grey Following link underneath the company's name.
3. Click on Unfollow.

**Personal Profile: Use Advanced Search and Get Introduced to find prospects and earn trust that leads to sales/partnerships.**

LinkedIn's search and Advanced Search functions are a great way to find and connect with potential new prospects. You can filter by relationship, groups, industry, and location, then even save the search for use in future. Even if you can't connect with someone directly, you might be able to pick up enough clues to contact them outside of LinkedIn, via their website or other social profile.

**Note:** If you hit the "Connect" button next to someone's name in LinkedIn search, your invite will be sent automatically and you will not be given the option to personalize your message - a big mistake. Make sure you click on the person's profile and click the "Connect" button you see there. From

here, a box will appear for you to compose a customized invite - more details on the best approach very shortly.

**Note:** Don't forget to take a peek at the "People Also Viewed" box in the right-hand sidebar for more people who might make excellent prospects!

Alternatively, you can make use of the Get Introduced feature. This allows you to contact members of LinkedIn who are in our 2nd degree or 3rd degree network. Here's how:

1. On the profile of the person you want to connect to, click "Get introduced through a connection" via the Send InMail drop-down menu. If only one of you can make the introduction, the Request an Introduction page will appear.
2. Hover your mouse pointer over the arrow next to the Send InMail button and click Get introduced. If more than one person can make the introduction, you may choose who you want to make the introduction.
3. Write and send your message.

In the same way you are thoughtful and gracious to people who want to connect with you, do the same when you want to connect to others - do not be salesy! Greet them by name and add a short note that personalizes your invitation, e.g. genuine evidence that you have enjoyed a blog post they wrote or a lecture they gave in which you were attendance. Complete your invitation by offering a compelling reason why you should connect with one another. These extra touches can help to flatter a potential connection, make a good first impression, and increase your chances of developing a relationship.

Once you have successfully connected with a prospect, send a quick thank you message and then follow-up with conversation to help the relationship blossom. Depending on the reasons you connected in the first place, and your overall goals, your follow-up strategy will differ. Ideally, you don't want to go pitching your service or product right off the bat; get to know your prospect first, perhaps by picking up on a commonality between yourselves from the details on their profile. It could be as simple as setting

up a reminder using the LinkedIn Contacts feature to "touch base" over the course of several weeks, or to sweeten things up by offering a free quote, PDF, or other valuable resource out of the goodness of your heart. When the relationship is sufficiently strong, you can think about moving the conversation to other social networks *and* offline as a way to get things moving towards your end goal, e.g. providing a product or service, or striking up a meaningful partnership.

**Personal Profile: Accept quality, relevant invites**
As well as looking to connect with others, start accepting invitations from those who want to connect with you. The more connections you have, the larger your expanded network grows, in turn creating more opportunities down the line. Unfortunately, spammers are present on LinkedIn as they are on all social networks, so be careful only to accept invites from reputable and relevant profiles.

**Personal Profile: use tags and notes to efficiently organize connections**
LinkedIn's Contacts feature (accessed via the Networks menu at the top of site) lists all of your connections on the social network. One of its most useful functions is the ability to tag individual people with custom labels. Doing so will allow you to group and organize different types of individuals (hot prospects, existing clients, thought leaders, etc.), so that you can sort, find, and contact them as quickly as efficiently as possible whenever the need arises. Just click 'tag' below a contact, then choose from the existing suggestions, or invent your own. Once done, you can filter connections by tag from the menu at the top of the Contacts page.

Taking organization and efficiency a step further, when you click on a contact to view their full profile, you will see a "Relationship" tab near the top, marked by a star. Click this to reveal several options, including a space to type notes about that person, add how you met, and a function to set reminders about them, e.g. when you need to follow-up with them. All of the information in this section is only visible to you.

**Note:** Your Contacts page will also alert you to significant events in the professional lives of your connections, such as when they start a new job.

Be sure to send a quick note to acknowledge a contact's success, keep in touch, and continue to reinforce your bond.

**Personal Profile: recommend and endorse others**

The more you give on LinkedIn, the more you'll get back later on down the line. Recommend and endorse others often - especially colleagues and even competitors - even if they don't ask you first. Each time you give or receive an endorsement, it will appear in the LinkedIn news feed for your network, which means more visibility for you and your brand. As you'll discover, endorsing somebody almost always results in them returning the favor, and as your endorsements grow you may even want to move that section towards the top of your profile to showcase your most valuable skills to potential contacts. Do keep in mind that you want your endorsements to be received as genuine and well deserved (more so by other users than the recipient, in a lot of cases), so don't go overboard on your first round of endorsements for an individual; spread your efforts out so that it doesn't come across as spammy or a suspicious act of over-praising.

A good rule of thumb is to review each invitation request received and make sure that the person in question has at least completed their profile and added a photo. Also ensure that the connection is purposeful and relevant to you and your brand. Do they, in your head, offer a good reason to connect, or do they personally tell you why they want to? Do you know them already, or have they worked in the same industry as you? Lastly, always reply when accepting a genuine and interesting connection request. This is an easy way to start forming relationships.

**Personal Profile, Showcase, and Company Pages: drive traffic with value-added updates and an emphasis on images**

Like other social media sites, focus on providing interesting and value-added updates to help others succeed in business. Research shows that the types of updates that resonate most with LinkedIn users are the sharing of expertise and industry insights, but of course you may want to talk about company developments and new products from time to time, too. The updates you share on your Company Page are displayed prominently on the main Home tab and include a nice big space for images, so don't forget to

make them compelling too; for personal accounts, updates appear in a feed visible when users sign in.

When you post an update to LinkedIn, you will need to copy and paste your link to the specific article and LinkedIn will automatically pull in the image and post for you. From there you can edit and publish your update. Use questions or ask for feedback to drive engagement! Remember that you can delete the URL that you pasted into the update after LinkedIn has found the website in question. This will keep your update looking more clean, concise, and clickable.

**Personal Profile: mention LinkedIn users and companies in updates to heighten engagement**

In April 2013, LinkedIn introduced mentions to its social network, allowing you to easily and effectively tag connections and companies in your updates, as well as in comments. LinkedIn mentions also seamlessly integrate with Twitter handles. When a person or company is mentioned, they will be notified within their LinkedIn profile. Here's how to start:

1. Begin by typing the name of a connection or a company in your LinkedIn status update box or a comment field on the Homepage.
2. Select someone from the list of your connections that appear in the drop-down, complete your status or comment and post it.

By mentioning individuals and companies in your updates, your ability to engage and grow connections with business partners and customers is given a welcome boost.

**Personal Profile, Showcase, and Company Pages: be visible, valuable and timely**

When you've built up a thriving network of connections, you're going to want to maintain that reputation. To do this, remain consistently visible, valuable and timely in your participation in all areas of LinkedIn. Your most recent activity will appear near the top of your profile, but if you're not very active, nothing will show. As with other social networks, a rate of activity that works out at about one or two updates a day is a good target to aim for.

If you need some inspiration as to what to share with your network, check out LinkedIn Pule for trending news topics, as well as the LinkedIn INfluencer program to share and comment on insights from well-known individuals across a variety of business sectors.

Use the Notifications option at the top of your profile to review the most recent interactions from your network, and respond in a timely manner. To keep on top of what might be a myriad of updates and choose what you want to get involved with, filter the updates on your LinkedIn homepage by Shares to see, at a glance, what is trending on your network.

**Personal Profile, Company Pages, and Showcase Pages: What to post?**

One of the most in-demand content types on LinkedIn, perhaps unsurprisingly, is industry insights. Research from the social network shows that 60% of users are interested in industry insights, over half are interested in company news, and more than one in four are interested in hearing about new products and services. As with other social networks, asking questions, including visual elements, sparking discussions, etc. are all good tactics. LinkedIn's busiest hours are weekdays, morning and midday, so experiment with posting at these times and monitor how your audience reacts.

**Personal Profile: Publish original "thought leader" content and grow a tribe of followers**

LinkedIn opened up its publishing platform to all users in February 2014. It allows you to post full blogs on LinkedIn that become part of your professional profile, and they are also sent out to your network as a status update. Ideally, you want to use the publishing platform as a way to share value-driven (non-salesy), expert content to both your current and potential audience. Potential topics include important trends in your industry, what advice you would give to someone hoping to enter your field of work, the biggest challenges your industry needs to solve, etc. There is no word limit, but some of the best examples so far aren't "full-on blog replacement" in length either. If you are inspired to come up with something between 400 and 600 words once a week that will build your credibility and strengthen your standing on the site, that is just what LinkedIn is looking for. A bite-sized version of a recent blog article isn't a bad idea (link to the full version

at the end of your post), and – for SEO purposes - make sure to give it a compelling title that differs to the original.

To start writing, click on the pencil icon in the usual status update box, and a familiar word processing layout (complete with the options to add links, videos, and images) will appear. Once you've finished writing, conclude your post with a call to action if necessary, but definitely include a quick few lines of bio with links back to your LinkedIn profile, website, or blog. When the post is shared to LinkedIn, re-post it on your Company page and other social networks for maximum exposure, then keep an eye on the metrics LinkedIn provides to help determine how well your content is resonating with your audience. As you publish more and the breadth of your statistics grows, you will be able to replicate the kind of post that does well.

**Personal Profile: join and be active in LinkedIn Groups**
This is a biggie. Whatever your industry, get involved in Groups related to your industry as a way to connect with others, discuss and learn new ideas, and - more subtly - as a way to connect with key partners and find out what your target market is interested in. Being actively involved in one or several LinkedIn Groups can have many benefits for businesses, including:

- Building more awareness about you within your target markets.
- Positioning your company (or you as an individual) as an industry thought leader
- Nurturing valuable industry relationships.
- A showcase for your great industry-leading content and products.
- Generation of interest and inquiries for your business.
- Converting Group members to subscribers and advocates for your brand.
- Using the ideas you find - from popular discussions, statuses with the most likes and comments, etc. - to help you work on ideas and topics to feature in your company's status updates.

As with much of social media, leaping into a LinkedIn Group only to self-promote will not go down well. Instead, use Groups as an opportunity to share posts on a topic of interest to other members, and to engage in conversations in order to highlights your expertise. When starting your own

discussion (whatever it may be about) draft a compelling title to encourage views and end your message with an open-ended question or a call to action to get people to reply. The more popular your post and the more active it is, the more visibility you will receive. As a result, people will see that you have important and meaningful insights into your area of business, and may then decide to follow or connect in order to build a relationship.

To help you discover new LinkedIn Groups, select Interests" from the menu at the top of your LinkedIn homepage, then click "Groups." You can also use this landing page to manage all future group participation. Selecting local groups with less members may also be beneficial, since their members are more likely to read your posts and there's a higher chance to make relevant, local connections. If you are already in a group, securing a spot in the Manager’s Choice carousel (a selection of featured topics chosen by the group owner and displayed at the top of the group’s Discussions page) can be a way to showcase yourself as an authority figure and attract others to you through "follows" and potential opportunities to connect. Regular positive interaction, like posting and commenting thoughtful topics and responses will raise your standing in the group, while promotional, spam, negative or inappropriate content will damage it.

If a group you intend to join is already well established, you can easily view and search for popular topics within it to see what type of questions and issues are drawing the most engagement and whether these are of interest to you and your business. Most easy is to simply click the "Popular" tab at the top of the group for a general overview. For a more thorough search:

1. Visit a group where your target market is active and click on the Search tab.  Notice a box on the left-hand side which allows you can search for posts by post type.
2. Use the search function to find the most engaging content on a given topic.
3. Create a log of the types of topics, questions and challenges which are being discussed by your target market.

*Start your own LinkedIn Group*

If you can't find a Group that's right for you, why not start your own? To create a LinkedIn Group, choose "Groups" from the "Interests" menu and click the "Create A Group" button on page that appears. Fill in as much detail on the Group creation page as possible.

*LinkedIn Group title, Summary, and description*
The right LinkedIn Group name is critical to attracting the right members, so include a simple and specific title that instantly tells people what the Group is about. Tying your Group name to a location, e.g. *"Toronto Entrepreneurs,"* or an industry, e.g. *"Hotel Industry Professionals,"* works well. Add a succinct and keyword-rich Summary (which will appear in, and help your Group be found, in search results. Around 140 characters of your Group description will appear in search before being cut off, so make them count!). Lastly, add a more detailed description, which will appear on your Group's profile page. Thinking about the Group description, use specific words and phrases that will encourage people to join, and differentiate you from the competition.

*Draft LinkedIn Group rules*
LinkedIn allows Group owners to draft a policy that contains the rules that they want the Group to follow. It is important to create Group rules that are firm and clear, so as to keep an air of professionalism and make the Group as good as it can be. Reiterate the rules to anyone who violates them and hint at them in your welcome email.

Bonus Tip: Use your welcome email to push information about your websites, blog, other social media profiles, etc.

*Pre-approve LinkedIn Group members*
LinkedIn allows Group owners to pre-approve every member who attempts to join your Group. While it does take extra time and effort, it is a great way to ensure the ongoing quality of your Group community. If you require certain criteria for members, make this clear in your welcome email.

*Use LinkedIn Group announcements*

LinkedIn Group Announcements is a feature that allows you to send one announcement per week directly to the email inboxes of all your members. This is the perfect opportunity to share new content, encourage people to visit your website and blog, invite them to an event or webinar, or anything else you think will benefit them and foster more brand loyalty. Do remember to craft a compelling subject line, to make sure your email is opened amongst all of the other LinkedIn notifications and other emails people receive every day.

*Be active in leading the LinkedIn Group*
As the owner of a LinkedIn Group, it is important that you maintain an active role in discussions and position yourself as its thought leader. Do not expect the Group to lead itself. Tips for keeping things ticking over nicely include posting a weekly discussion or question (with a LinkedIn Poll, perhaps), commenting on existing discussions, and encouraging engagement through questions and feedback requests.

Direct your Group members to reputable sources of information that are relevant to them and to specific discussions in order to build relationships and credibility. Don't ever use LinkedIn Groups to blatantly pitch for sales, as you run the risk of turning away potential prospects. LinkedIn, like other social networks, doesn't fit well with direct, hard selling.

**Company and Showcase Pages: monitor and tweak performance with Content Marketing Score and Trending Content**
In order to gain a clear insight into the performance of your paid and organic content on LinkedIn, keep an eye on your Content Marketing Score, a feature first introduced in April 2014. It measures reach and engagement with your Company Pages, LinkedIn Groups, employee updates, Sponsored updates, and more. It then gives you a single score, ranked against your competition, and provides recommendations about how to improve your score. To drill down the information for more detailed insights, you can filter your Content Marketing Score by location, company size, industry, and more. If you want to get the best idea of how your LinkedIn marketing is helping you reach your social media goals, use your Content Marketing Score in conjunction with the rest of the site's analytics tools.

Meanwhile, Trending Content is a tool that ranks all of the issues that resonate most with specific audiences on LinkedIn by their levels of sharing and engagement. Use Trending Content as a way to help tailor the content you post to be as effective and relevant as possible.

**Personal Profile: Analyze your history with the Data Export Tool**
The free LinkedIn Data Export tool provides you with a .csv file complete with a detailed overview of your past LinkedIn activity. Crucially, the data it holds data can be analyzed to tweak and optimize your LinkedIn profile, relationship-building strategy (on LinkedIn and away from the site), and ad-targeting. Well worth a look!

*How to find the Data Export tool and request an archive:*
1. Go to Privacy and Settings section, under Account.
2. In the settings, click the Account tab on the bottom left-hand side.
3. Click the "Request an Archive of Your Data" link.
4. Click the "Request Archive" button.

When your archive is ready (normally within 72 hours, but sometimes sooner), LinkedIn will send you an email with a link you can use to start the download. Some of the most useful archives to explore and utilize exploit for your benefit include:

Ads Targeting: information to create and target LinkedIn ads more effectively, based on data about your profile).
Ads Click Data: see which LinkedIn ads you click on).
Skills: review and revise a list of your Interest keywords, with a quick copy and paste from the .csv into your web profile).
Connections: a full list of your connections and their basic info to help re-target LinkedIn ads).
Endorsements: (a full list of people who have endorsed you - use it to leverage and cultivate relationships with your biggest fans. Need references too? Export your profile as a PDF via the Edit Profile drop-down menu from your personal page).

Comments: view all past comments to see if there is anything you need to follow up or develop upon.
Search Queries: A way to see which successful searches you have made on LinkedIn.

**Note:** If you have clients who are willing to give you access to their LinkedIn Data files, the above archives will provide invaluable data on the behavior of your customers as well.

**Company and Showcase Pages: LinkedIn paid advertising basics**
To boost the visibility and reach of your best posts from your Company and Showcase page updates on LinkedIn, you might want to experiment with paid advertising; they're not as cheap as, say, Facebook ads, but could be worth your while if your audience primarily hangs out on LinkedIn. To set up an ad, visit the LinkedIn Ads page (http://ads.linkedin.com), and click Start Now to begin. One of the options that makes most sense for brands is Sponsored Updates, which you can use to boost the visibility of your existing LinkedIn posts. Whichever ad type you choose, you'll be able to target it towards specific audiences based on location, job title and category, company name and category, group, and more. In order to make your ad spend as effective as possible, spend time to anchor it with an appealing headline (questions work well, e.g. "*Need a Web Designer?*", an eye-grabbing image (the maximum size is 50 x 50 pixels; use colors that contrast against the white background of the site) and a strong call-to-action like "Download", "Try", or "Sign Up.".

**Note:** Your ads account is organized by campaigns. Each campaign has its own daily budget, targeting options, and ads. LinkedIn recommends that you create at least 3 ad variations, varying the ad text, call-to-actions, and images each time. You can create up to 15 different ads within a campaign, and by doing so, you'll be in the optimum position to see which ads performs best. Once a promotion is live, visit your Company and Showcase page's analytics to see how it performs.

# YouTube Tips:
# Video Made the Marketing Star

Despite rising competition from Facebook and other smaller competitors, YouTube remains the world's most popular online destination for video creation and sharing, and it is absolutely fantastic as a marketing tool. Using the power of video in conjunction with other social media outlets to show your business off to the world has countless benefits, and this chapter will show you how to reap the rewards with YouTube.

## YouTube Channel Optimization

**Choose an optimum YouTube URL, link your account to Google+**
Choose a YouTube username that reflects your brand for your channel URL - preferably not too long or complicated, and one that represents the name of your company or product. You will then be able to send people to this memorable address, e.g. "http://www.youtube.com/user/yourcompanyname." Your username will default as your channel title, but you may want to change this for SEO purposes, or - as YouTube will ask for all new accounts - reflect the name associated with a Google+ profile or business page. Having a public identity that is consistent across Google will allow you to optimize your sharing, content distribution, content discovery, channel management, and more. This public identity is managed through Google+.

**Note:** If you have an existing YouTube channel that you want to link to Google+, go to your account settings on YouTube and click "Link channel with Google+" below your email address.

**Create an engaging YouTube profile and description**

Don't ignore your YouTube account's "About" section. Use it to sell your channel and its benefits to potential subscribers, and include all relevant social media and web links. Fill out a keyword-rich description that will tell people all about your channel, what they will gain from it, why they should subscribe, what your upload schedule is, etc. This text will be picked up by search engines and help your channel to rank higher in search results. The first 45 or so characters of your description will be visible when your YouTube channel appears in the "Channels" sub-section of the site's search results, so pack it with keyword-rich information.

**Fill out your Channel Keywords**

When people search YouTube, the site does not just return individual videos for people to watch, it also suggests whole channels that a viewer might be interested in. So, in the Advanced section of your account's Channel Settings, be sure to fill in the Channel Keywords section with keywords relevant to your channel. Think about the types of search terms that your viewers will be using and be sure to throw them in.

**Associate your website with your YouTube channel**

Visit your Channel Settings' "Advanced" menu again and you'll see an option to associate your channel with a website. Doing so will help YouTube to improve the quality of its search results and verify your channel as the official representation of your brand on the site. Enter your website URL and verify that you own it via the options listed, including an HTML tag or through Google Analytics.

**Brand your YouTube channel background and add a high-res avatar image**

Upload a square, high-resolution (1600 × 1600 pixel) profile photo that is recognizable at smaller resolutions. This avatar will be your channel’s billboard all over YouTube, including in search results and comments. If you have chosen to link your Google+ account and YouTube channel, your Google+ profile or company page profile photo will have automatically become your YouTube avatar. If you want to change your profile image on YouTube, you will need to edit it via Google+, but be patient as the update might take a while to appear.

## Optimize your YouTube banner art for all devices

In June 2013, YouTube rolled out a new channel layout called the One Channel design. This new look enables consistent branding across all devices (desktops, mobiles, televisions, etc.), allows you to reach out to non-subscribed viewers via a channel 'trailer' and shows off more of your content to existing subscribers to keep them watching for longer.

The One Channel layout's main branding opportunity consists of just one main banner that features your channel's profile photo to the left, and links to the channel's website and social media profiles on the right. YouTube recommends uploading an image that is 2560 × 1140 pixels in size. Inside this massive space are sections that cater to different screen sizes. For instance, the whole image will be seen on large televisions, while a central section of 1546 × 425 pixels is the 'safe' area where your logo will be visible on all devices. Whatever your design, do your best to feature your brand's personality in the channel art. Make the audience feel like they are connecting with a person or character when they arrive at your channel; this is a tactic that will encourage them to stick around.

**Note:** Download a YouTube channel art template optimized for desktop and mobile screens (and lots of other great stuff) via the *Premium Content Bundle* chapter of this book.

## Create a trailer for your YouTube channel

On the YouTube One Channel layout, you can show a trailer that will only appear (and autoplay!) to people who are not already subscribed to your channel. This is the perfect chance for you to let viewers know what your channel is all about and tell them why they should subscribe. Keep it short and to the point, eye-catching - and include a clear call to action, inviting your audience to subscribe. My trailer is about 30 seconds long, and I used the simple tools at Animoto.com to create a snazzy video that far outperforms anything I could have created alone with my limited video editing skills. If you're like me, I'd certainly recommend giving the site a look.

One other thing I love about channel trailers is that a good portion of the video's description is displayed adjacent to them. Use this space to describe what you and your channel have to offer, and don't forget to include relevant hyperlinks (shortened using tools such as bit.ly so that they are not cut off, as they will be if they are too long) and a call to action too.

To add a channel trailer, you must enable the Browse tab on your One Channel layout. The Browse tab lets you customize the display of your content. If enabled, this will be your default tab for all visitors. To enable the Browse tab:

1. Hover your cursor over the menu bar that contains the 'Video', 'About', and 'Discussion' tabs on your Channel Page.
2. Click on the pencil icon that appears and select 'Edit channel navigation'.
3. From here, click the button to enable the Browse feed, and then click Save.

When you re-visit your channel page, you will see a channel trailer placeholder and a '+ Channel trailer' button. Select this to choose to embed your channel trailer (which you must have already have uploaded). If you do not want a channel trailer or are in the process of making one, you can choose any existing video to sit in its place.

**Set up a Fan Finder video ad for free exposure**
Fan Finder is a YouTube service that promises to find and connect your channel to new viewers at no cost to you. When Fan Finder spots a potential fan, it shows an ad promoting your channel before another video plays in the hopes of encouraging them to click over and become a new, loyal viewer. Fan Finder videos must be 2 minutes or less in length. Best practices include quickly introducing your channel and hooking people in (don't assume people will have heard of your channel before and remember that they can skip the ad after the first 5 seconds has played). Entertain the viewer with teasers relevant to your content, include a strong call to action to explain why they should subscribe, and make sure your branding is clear and repeated throughout. This way, even if the viewer does not click

through, it gives the best chance possible that they will remember your channel and visit on their own accord in future.

To set up a Fan Finder video, visit https://www.youtube.com/fan_finder. You can choose any of your uploaded videos to be your Fan Finder video as long as it is two minutes or less in length. My advice is to create a custom advert or - if you're a bit pressed for time - simply use your channel trailer as an easy and effective substitute.

### Create playlists and sections to group and feature great content – even if it isn't yours

From the controls on your main Channel page, build playlists to feature your "Best of..." and most viewed content, and to ensure people view a series of videos in the order that they were intended. Playlists will lure people in to experiencing the breadth of the content you offer and encourage multiple video views in one session. If a playlist requires context, upload a short and snappy intro video and place it at the beginning of the list. If you're not ready to create your own videos just yet, playlists offer a smart way to build subscriptions by curating the best content from other channels. Create playlists full of videos that your audience will love, and position yourself as a one-stop destination for insightful curated content. When you begin to publish your own videos, you can choose to continue curating content from others or simply phase it out.

## YouTube Marketing and Content Strategy

### Focus on quality, edit well, and grab FREE YouTube Music

Whatever content you create for YouTube, a basic standard of quality is essential. At a minimum you should ensure that the video quality is high definition (at least 720p), that the audio is clear and balanced, that the lighting is good, and (if fitting), you use varying camera angles to add variety and dynamism to the finished product. Viewers rarely expect YouTube content to have Hollywood production values, but watching a person talking down into the tinny microphone of their low-res webcam isn't going to give anybody a good first impression, or reflect well on your

brand. If you're serious about videos as a social media tool, consider investing in a decent camera and video editing software, such as Adobe Premier. Include only necessary footage in your videos - don't be afraid to cut - and add transitions, overlays and graphics to help convey your story.

Want free music and sound effects for your videos? Check out the YouTube Audio Library. It features thousands of royalty-free instrumental tracks (arranged by mood, genre, instrument and duration) and sound effects that you can use for free, forever, for any creative purpose (not just in your YouTube videos). Access it via a link on your Video Manager page, or at https://www.youtube.com/audiolibrary/
Another extremely popular source of royalty free music for YouTube videos is Incompetech (http://incompetech.com/music/royalty-free/), with tons of great tracks available for download and use as long as credit is given.

**Find your company's cheerleader and use screen capturing**
Who is the cheeriest person in your office? Consider them to front your YouTube videos, as they'll appeal to your audience. Everyone shy about being on camera? If you don't have anyone who wants to be the face of your business, consider something like Google Search Stories (http://www.youtube.com/user/SearchStories) to show off your best online properties or if, like me, you do a lot of web demonstrations, use screen capturing software such as Camtasia (expensive but great quality and editing options) or Screenr (completely free, but without editing features). *Ideally*, you want to have a person in front of camera, or a mix of screen capture and someone onscreen, as this approach will resonate with your audience best.

**Find the correct tone of voice**
Your tone of voice in a video is very important. Remember, it's a conversation you're having, so avoid the cheesy radio announcer voice and speak naturally. When expressing yourself on video, be real. Robotic speech or blatantly reading from a script will not appeal to viewers. Talk directly to your fans as if you’re in a room with them; it couldn't get much more personal than that.

**Hook viewers with a teaser or intrigue**
With low viewer attention spans and YouTube making it so easy for them to click away to someone else's content, it is crucial to use the opening seconds of your video to hook viewers in and keep them watching *your* recordings until the end.  This portion of your video only needs to be a few seconds long, but its effectiveness can pay dividends towards watch time and viewer engagement. Examples include:

- Showing off the finished result in a "how to" video and telling your audience that this is what they'll have learned to create by the end of your clip.
- Offering a mysterious line or quip like, *"What is the link between a potato and unbelievable sales conversion? Keep watching to find out..."*

**What is the best video length for YouTube?**
The question *"How long should my YouTube videos be?"* is a complicated one, and the answer depends on a myriad of factors, including the subject of your videos and your target audience. In short, the "right" length for a YouTube video is exactly as long as it keeps people watching (shorter videos, around 5 minutes maximum seems to be a widely accepted limit, but if your content needs longer and it keeps people hooked, then all power to you). Some basic rules to keep people watching include keeping content relevant to your audience *and* especially in relation to your video's title and custom thumbnail (more on both of these coming up), knowing what message you want to communicate and sticking to it, and editing out all unnecessary waffling or distraction. If you saw two videos offering exactly the same information - one 3 minutes long and the other 20 minutes long, which would you click on? Similarly, if you started watching a short video and the information promised was not being delivered quickly, you would be very likely to give up on it.

**Keep video intro titles short (or get rid of them altogether)**
How many videos do you stop watching because of long and boring introductions featuring pointless graphics and awful music? Jump straight into the action to keep viewers hooked or, if necessary, at least keep your

intro graphics short and snappy, explaining who you are and what the video is all about.

**Plan your greeting and sign off**
Start every video with a greeting, your name, and business name. Finish with your business name and tag line. I do this for all my videos as they act as two little plugs for this book, and also encourage users to 'Click the subscribe button' to tempt more subscribers and guarantee future views. My YouTube intro and sign-offs are as follows:

**Intro:** *Hello everybody, it's Andrew here again, author of 500 Social Media Marketing Tips; check out the link in the description to grab your copy today. In this video, I'm going to show you...*

**Sign Off:** *That's all for this time, I hope it helped. Don't forget to click 'subscribe' for lots more social media marketing tips like this one, to give me a like if you enjoyed this video - and to check out the link to my book in the description below. Thanks very much for watching, and good bye!*

**Feature call to actions within your videos**
Depending on where during the video would be most effective, include calls to action (CTAs) to direct your viewers - do you want them to visit your website, call you for a quote, watch another video, reply to a question in the comments, subscribe for more great content, click an annotation or the link in the description? Tell them! CTAs can be implemented in several ways, including direct from the video host, as clickable annotations or in on-screen graphics. For example, at the end of each of my videos, I have an end card that features a teaser of my previous video (clickable via a spotlight annotation), and calls to action that encourage viewers to "like" the video they have just watched, and encouraging them to subscribe to my channel.

**Use annotations to boost interactivity, revitalize old content, and drive web traffic**
Where relevant, feature annotations in your YouTube videos that add value, a bit like the way stats and information is displayed onscreen during a

sports game on television. Access the Annotations tool on your Video Manager page. Click Edit underneath the video you want to add an annotation to, then choose Annotations from the drop-down menu. Here are a few ways annotations can be used well:

*Highlight nuances of details forgotten in the edit*
Sometimes you'll create and publish a video, only to realize you forgot to mention one important detail that is essential to the video as a whole - d'oh! Shooting the whole thing again might be either impossible or too time-consuming, but an annotation can be used to inform viewers of the key, supplementary, info while they watch.

*Revitalize old content*
Using the YouTube Annotations tool is also helpful if you have created a video which, as time passes, features out-of-date info. Rather than deleting the video, create a fresh video with the updated information, then go back to the original video and embed an annotation with a call to action that takes people to the updated video page when clicked.

*Ask for likes, comments, and subscriptions*
One of the most popular uses for annotations is to ask for video likes, comments, or subscriptions. It can be an effective tactic and it's one I employ myself - but I would recommend leaving these types of annotations until the end of your videos. Bombarding viewers at the start or throughout your videos with these types of messages is, at best, distracting - and at worse can be enough to put people off you and your channel completely.

*Create Associated website annotations*
Associated website annotations enable you to add a clickable link to a non-YouTube URL within the video player itself. They work great for branding purposes, and as an easy way to direct people either audibly or visually to click through to your website. Here's how to set one up:

1. Verify ownership of your YouTube account by telephone at
http://www.youtube.com/verify

2. Add your website as an associated website and verify ownership of it via Google Webmaster Tools - visit https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools to do this. You'll need backend access to your site to add some code, so contact your web developer if you need help here.
3. Back on your YouTube Video Manager page, visit the "Advanced" section of the Channel Settings menu. Here, add your website URL to the box next to "Associated website." When confirmed, a green "Success" circle will appear.
4. You're done! When adding an annotation to your videos, choose the Associated Website type from the drop-down menu, and add your full website URL into the box provided.

**Annotation duration, size, color, placement, number, & text**

*Duration*

Although annotations can be closed manually by a viewer (by hovering over them and clicking the X), remove any potential hindrance by only displaying your annotations for as long as it takes to read them. Adjust the length of time an annotation displays, using the slidebar in the Annotations tool. YouTube recommends that, in most cases, 5-7 seconds is sufficient enough time for most annotations to be read and understood or clicked.

*Size*

Just because your annotations can take up the whole of the video player doesn't mean that they should! Try to make them as small as possible so that they are as subtle as they need to be and block as little of your video content as has to be covered. Also, as with almost every area of the Internet, WRITING YOUR ANNOTATIONS IN CAPS may be considered shouting or rude, so it is best avoided.

*Color*

If your annotation is critical to the theme or message of your video, then filling them in bright and eye-catching colors such as yellow, blue, orange, red or pink could be the way forward. Otherwise, however, annotations need not be the center of attention, and more muted colors such as grey, white, black - or even the transparent option - work best. Whichever

background fill color you use, make sure that the text color contrasts with it so that your annotation is easily read.

*Placement*
Avoid placing annotations in the lower third of your videos. The advertisement overlay can obscure annotations placed there, and an embedded YouTube video can also obstruct annotations along the very top of the frame. Try to position them away from the very center of the video, where they can be distracting. The left and right sidebars are a good option.

*Number*
YouTube recommends using the fewest number of annotations necessary in any given video. They also suggest that you avoid displaying two annotations at the same time, as this can be distracting for viewers. However, in instances at the end of a video where, for example, you are asking viewers to click an annotation to subscribe to your channel, hit 'like' or view another video, I think this advice can be somewhat overlooked.

*Type*
Choose the most appropriate type of annotation to use in your video. Title annotations, because of their size, are useful for adding headings at the beginning of your video. Notes and Labels are good for briefly highlighting important points or adding a quick call to action, Then there's Speech Bubbles: many people use these as a way to 'point' to buttons that exist around the video on the YouTube website (Like, subscribe, comment, etc.). However, these annotations will make no sense to anyone watching if the video is embedded on a website or in full-screen. The best use for Speech Bubbles is as a whimsical way to add thoughts or speech to characters in your video.

**Experiment with YouTube cards – the evolution of annotations**
Launched in the spring of 2015, YouTube cards provide a new way to add a layer of interactivity to your videos. Cards be used to direct viewers to other videos, merchandise, websites, playlists, and more, and unlike annotations, they also work on mobiles! The six types of card currently available are:

Merchandise, Fundraising, Video, Playlist, Associated Website and Fan Funding. To create a card, click on the “Cards” tab in your Video Editor.

*How YouTube cards work*
When a card is applied to a video, a teaser for it will appear for a few seconds at a time you designate. If clicked, the full card will appear for use. Here, a viewer will - depending on the card type - see a link, customizable image (cropped to a square), title (50 characers max), and call-to-action (25 characters max). At any other stage of the video, viewers will notice an icon appear if they hover their mouse over the player (desktop) or when the player controls are visible (mobile). At any point, they can click on the icon to view all cards that are applied to the video.

*Making the most of YouTube cards*

- Cards should be inserted in a contextual manner as a way to help you reach your business goals through video, whilst also providing an enriched experience for the viewer. Up to five cards can be used in any one video.
- Don't physically point to a card in your video as it may appear differently depending on the viewer's device.
- Cards work most effectively when they are not placed too close together, so try spacing them throughout your videos at key points.
- Analyze the performance of cards - and use the date to improve their function - within YouTube Analytics.

**Add a branding watermark to your videos**
A branding watermark allows you to embed a channel logo to appear across all of your videos. When clicked, it allows non-subscribed viewers to quickly and easily subscribe. To access and set it up, click on Channel Settings within Video Manager and choose the Branding option. An effective strategy I have employed is to create an InVideo Programming watermark that is a call to action. Mine is an image that reads 'FREE Social Media Tutorials' and sits in the corner of all my videos. Whichever image you choose, best practice denotes that it has a transparent background and

uses just one color, so not to be distracting to viewers – especially those watching on mobile devices.

**Post videos regularly and consistently**

Once you launch a YouTube account and publish your first video, don't just abandon your account thereafter. In order to start building traction with an audience, stay regular by publishing at least one video per week. If possible, release videos on the same day every week; viewers like structure and they will know when they can look forward to new content If you can't be around to post a video manually, use the feature to schedule your upload for posting ahead of time - this option is available from the drop-down menu on the video upload page. All this said, don't feel required to stick rigidly to a posting schedule; be flexible enough so that you are able to respond to things like breaking news or viral video trends.

**YouTube Video Optimization Strategies**

After Google, YouTube is the world's second-largest search engine, and it uses metadata – your video's title, tags and description – to index your video correctly. In addition, when someone searches for your video on YouTube, the site uses a variety of factors to judge where it will appear in the list of results, including the number of views, how long people typically watch it for, its tally of likes and comments, how many subscribers your channel has, how often the video has been embedded, and more. To maximize the chances of your video being found, it is imperative that your videos' metadata is optimized. Here are some tips to do just that:

**YouTube video title SEO**

When coming up with a title for your videos, think about what your audience is likely to search for and reflect that in the words that you use. Your video title should be keyword rich and *match* the content that your content contains. Only the first ~45 characters of your video title are displayed in the YouTube search results on mobile devices, so make sure you front-end load the title with your primary keyword phrase(s). Here are some quick pointers to help get even more from your video headings:

- Use deliberate capitalization of words to highlight your content, e.g. 'The Top 10 Reasons Facebook Marketing Works' instead of 'The top 10 reason Facebook marketing works'.
- Add colon after your initial keywords and rephrase your title. For example, your video on saving money “Save Money Easily: The Simple Money Saving Plan.” This will help capture those people who are searching for videos by using two similar (but different) phrases.
- Make your title's catchy in a way that will encourage users to click. For example, in a video that teaches people how to tie a bow tie - and do it in 30 seconds or less - which of the following would be more appealing: "How to Instructions and Advice About How to Tie A Bow Tie" or "Tie A Bow Tie in 30 Seconds or Less."
- Include keywords at the start of your video title and branding near the end, e.g. "How to Fix A Cracked iPhone 6 Screen | The iPhone Wizards Tutorials"

**Write effective video descriptions**

The first few sentences of your video description will appear in YouTube search results, and the same few lines of it will appear below your content on the video's individual page followed by a "See More" link that must be clicked in order to read the rest. Therefore, good practice is to use the beginning of your video description to accurately describe what your video is all about in one or two sentences, as this is the most valuable snippet for SEO purposes. For people who click to view your description in full, consider adding the following information to all of your video descriptions:

- A description of your channel and a link to your channel page.
- A call to action asking viewers to subscribe, and a link to click.
- Links to more episodes or related videos and playlists.
- Links to your website and social media profiles, and a call to action to follow you.
- Information about your channel's video upload schedule, e.g. "New videos uploaded every Friday."
- Links to useful time-codes for long videos using the X:XX format, e.g. "Talk of squirrels starts at 3:44."

**Note:** Often, the links listed above are placed at the beginning of descriptions for maximum visibility. When adding links in your video description, type out the entire URL to your website, including the “http://” prefix, so that YouTube will automatically hyperlink it. Otherwise, people won’t be able to click through to your site.

**Tag your video effectively**

Tags are descriptive keywords that help people find your videos, so the more relevant your tags, the more discoverable your video will be. The following list will help you write tags as effectively as possible:

- Come up with a set of standard tags that can be applied to any video you upload, e.g. sports, film, food, videogames, etc. - Set video info defaults for these to automatically appear via Channel Settings > Defaults.
- There is no perfect number of tags, but they should always be topically accurate and concise, and you should use enough to thoroughly describe your video's content.
- To help you come up with tags, think about the different keywords that viewers will search find your video; if your video was split into sections or themes, how would you describe them in a single word or phrase?
- To boost your video's search ranking, use quotation marks to isolate important keyword phrases with multiple words, e.g. "how to make a paper airplane", as well as typing the phrase without the punctuation.
- Use keywords and phrases from the video title in your tags.
- Actively update and optimize archived videos with relevant tags when new search trends emerge.

**Select the right video category**

Make sure that you submit your YouTube video to the right category - choose the one that your viewers are most likely to look under to find your content. If there is no exact match (and there often isn't), choose the category that most closely fits your upload. Videos submitted in irrelevant categories may not get relevant traffic, so this step is important. If your video could fit into two categories, select the one where you think it might have least competition to increase the chances of it being found or even featured.

**Caption all your videos, add the transcript to the description**
It might take a little longer, but adding accurate transcripts for your videos to make them accessible to the hearing impaired shows that you really care about your customers; crucially, the text is also picked up by YouTube search and helps greatly in the ranking of your video in listings. To create captions for a video, type out the text of all the audio, upload it via the "Subtitles and CC" tab, and it will automatically sync to your content. Even if you don't upload captions, YouTube may automatically generate them. You can edit and improve automatically-generated captions in the Edit Video interface using the Translator Toolkit.

In addition, paste your transcript in the video description, too, as it's a good way to add relevant, keyword-rich information to your content, which will benefit you SEO-wise. In addition, it will give people an easy way to refer back to different sections of the video, which is particularly useful if what you are discussing is an in-depth or complicated subject.

**Create a custom video thumbnail (or choose the best default option)**
Thumbnails act as mini marketing posters for your content and are important in attracting viewers to your videos wherever they are seen - either on YouTube, in Google search results or embedded on websites. Assuming your account is in good standing, you may have the option to upload a thumbnail once your video has uploaded. If the feature isn't enabled (mine took a good few months to appear) be patient as you can always go back and add them in later. In the meantime, you can choose the best option from a default selection of three thumbnail images that YouTube offers you after your content is uploaded. YouTube recommends a custom thumbnail be sized to 1280 x 720 pixels, and you can create them in an image editor like Photoshop or GIMP, or easily online at sites like Canva or PicMonkey.

If you are able to create your own, one tactic I often employ is to use the thumbnail to double-up on the impact of a great video title. For example, if I had a video entitled *"How to Write A Great YouTube Title"*, I would create a thumbnail image with the same phrase written on it in a big, bold font and

a contrasting background so that it stands out from all competing videos in YouTube's search results.  The ideal size to create a YouTube thumbnail in a photo editor is 1280 × 720 pixels, so that it appears crisp and clear across the site, whichever device it is viewed on.

*The general guidelines YouTube recommends for thumbnails are:*
- Clear, in-focus, hi-resolution (640 × 360 pixels min, 16:9 aspect ratio)
- Bright, high-contrast
- Close-ups of faces
- Visually compelling imagery
- Well-framed, good composition
- Foreground stands out from background
- Looks great at both small and large sizes.
- Accurately represents the content.

**YouTube Video Ideas for Business**
One of the easiest ways to judge what type of content will work for your business on YouTube is to search for and study other popular videos within your business niche, and use them as inspiration - make yours better in every way. That aside, here are an additional selection of popular video idea strategies:

**Interview experts at trade shows**
To spread your reputation as an industry expert, interview your peers at trade events that you attend and film these interactions to create a YouTube video afterwards (make sure to get permission from the subject and event organizer first, though). It's a great form of marketing, particularly if the interviewee is popular and well respected, and links to your video after you've posted it online. You could even get someone to interview you - you're an expert in your field, right? Easy, powerful video content for you right there!

**Create a video series and encourage people to watch all of it**
One-off videos are all well and good, but a planned series of videos will keep viewers engaged over a number of days or weeks, and ensure you of some healthy watch-time statistics. A series is also useful for chopping

what might be one long video into separate, shorter, more viewable chunks. When you launch a video series, make sure to actually tell people that the video is part of a series (visually in the title (e.g. *How to Knit A Winter Scarf: Part 1*) and audibly (e.g. *"This is part one of your guide to knitting a warm scarf for winter"*) and encourage them to subscribe to come back for more with an end card message and a regular upload schedule. As well as video titles, series' do best when they include consistent video tags (good for SEO), themed video thumbnails (so that people can easily see that a group of videos are related), and when they are organized into a specific playlist (so that a viewer can click "play" just once and watch the whole series of videos in one go).

**Be funny, useful, and unexpected**

Some of the most popular and shared content on YouTube are ones that make people laugh, so if you can work a humorous element into your videos, all the better. As with so much other social media content, people search YouTube to discover useful information, so create content that addresses your audience’s needs, like "how-to" tutorials related to your products, or any kind of advice that you think your audience might want to know the answer to. 'How to' videos are a great way to do this - use your expertise! Video content that elicits an emotional response from your audience can often be very powerful, so  it works for your brand, look into producing something off-the-wall and unexpected that will resonate with your audience, and encourage them to engage.

**Record product demos and reviews**

Rather than *telling* people what your product or service can do, why not *show* them instead? Product demo videos are a great way to demonstrate your wares to customers. Alternatively, record videos of product reviews - not necessarily of your own products, but those your customers will be interested in. For popular examples as proof of how this strategy works, search YouTube for stuff like reviews of iPads, vacuum cleaners, gym equipment or any type of consumer goods.

**Show viewers around, upload presentations and talks**

Take your audience on a tour of your offices and city to help them feel connected with you and your brand; give them a sneak peek behind the scenes. Upload recordings of presentations you've given, to demonstrate your authority within your business niche, and to show off your public speaking skills.

**Ask your audience to review and promote your products**
Ask your audience to use your product in their videos (like product placement in movies), or to provide reviews, and cross-promote each other. You can then feature these customer-created videos on other social networking sites to increase your exposure, and play to the vanity of your customers, who will love to see themselves featured on your pages.

**Ask and answer questions for your audience**
One of the best ways to get and keep your audience engaged on YouTube is to ask questions for them to answer or ask them to submit questions for you to reply to. For the former, ask viewers to submit a comment or record and link to a video response. For the latter ask fans to leave a comment featuring a question for a chance to see it answered in your next video or, even better, to video record themselves asking the question which they then email to you so that you can feature it in your next upload. Imagine how surprised and delighted a customer will feel if you show off their feedback in a video, rather than just respond to it via a reply in the comments.

**Announcements and community service**
Do you have key dates or occasions in your business' life?  Mark them with a video and thank your customers for their support, e.g. your 1000th customer or 100th video. Highlight the causes your organization cares about and the philanthropy you carry out in the local community - make videos that show you care.

**News and views - be timely and topical**
Are you in a dynamically moving industry? Show your expertise by making videos to announce and discuss breaking news and information. React to trending topics in your niche with relevant content when it makes sense for

your audience. Being part of what’s going viral, rising search trends or breaking news can be critical for certain content. News and politics, sports, commentary, and opinion content can thrive on topicality.

**Collaborate with your peers, study the competition**
Look into collaborating with other, relevant, YouTube channel owners in order to share audiences, introduce each other to new subscribers and publish complementary content. As well as appearing in each other's videos, you can feature any playlist from another channel as a section on your own channel by selecting the “Enter a playlist URL” option when setting one up - arrange for this to happen periodically. In addition, feature brands that you like and support in the About section of your YouTube channel (and ask them to do the same). Under the Featured Channels menu, choose "Add channels", then search for your buddies via their YouTube username or channel URL.

**Convert podcasts into YouTube videos**
Does your company have a podcast? Turn them into videos and upload them to YouTube to expand your reach. YouTube won't let you upload the audio alone, so create one or several graphics to complement the topic of the video.

## Increasing Views on Your YouTube Videos

**Extending video impact strategy**
Here's a quick tip to compound the impact of a new video: ‘Like’ and ‘favorite’ the video on your channel after a timely increment (for example, 24 hours later) to make it reappear in your subscribers’ "All Activity" home page feed, and give them another chance to see it if they missed it first time around.

**Use the feed to engage viewers**
The feed broadcasts your YouTube channel activities to your current subscribers. By default the feed includes uploads, liked videos, videos added to playlists, bulletins, comments you make, channels to which you subscribe, and ‘favorited’ videos. Adjust your sharing settings to set the

appropriate feed strategy for your channel and subscriber interests. If you do not upload regularly, the feed allows an easy way to appear active by broadcasting your other activities on the site. Space out your interactions on YouTube: multiple actions get aggregated into a single post for your subscribers, so maximize their impact as individual posts, by leaving time in between.

**Post a bulletin to your subscribers**

A bulletin is a text update you send from your Channel page to all of your subscribers. You can tell your subscribers about a video you're working on, remind them of an awesome video you posted recently or include a link to a video you recommend, with a comment about it. When you post a bulletin, it will appear on your subscribers' recent activity feed (on their homepages) and on your Channel page in your recent activity feed. Here's how to post a bulletin:

1. Sign into your YouTube account
2. Go to your Channel page
3. When viewing your Feed underneath the 'Browse videos' tab you will see a 'Create a new post' text field box. Enter your bulletin's text, add a video or playlist link to share (optional) and click 'Post'
4. Your bulletin will then be sent out to your subscribers.

**Blog about your videos**

Every time you post a new video, compose a blog post based around it, and share it with your fans and followers and social media. Conversely, if you write a blog post that is particularly visual and would work well as a video, then why not screen grab it while you talk through it and turn the blog post into content for your YouTube channel? I often use this strategy for step-by-step guides, and as a bonus the blog text sitting right in front of me is a helpful reminder of what I want to say!

**Embed a YouTube Subscribe widget on your blog or website**

A YouTube Subscribe widget is a little box that you can embed in the sidebar of your website to encourage people to subscribe to your channel, or click through to check it out. It displays your YouTube channel icon, subscriber count, the number of videos you have published and, of course,

an all-important Subscribe button. What I like about it most is that it acts as a permanent advertisement for your video content. I combine my widget with an embedded playlist that displays my most recently-published video to compound its effectiveness. For a look at a YouTube Subscribe widget, further instructions, and the code needed to embed one on your own website, visit the following link: http://bit.ly/youtubesubscribewidget

**Leverage other social media to increase reach**
- Post your video to Facebook, (making sure to choose the best thumbnail).
- Tweet about it on Twitter with a couple of relevant hashtags (also include the prefix "Video:" before the video title, as although a shortened YouTube URL will show, it may not always be immediately obvious to your followers that you're sharing visual content - something they are more likely to engage with.
- Pin your video to Pinterest and make sure that the video's title and a short description is posted along with it, as well as a couple of relevant hashtags. All of these details will improve the chances of your content being found by others in Pinterest search.
- Consider submitting your video to other major video sharing sites such as Dailymotion and Vimeo. These sites might not have the massive popularity of YouTube, but it could be that your most lucrative customers only ever browse those video websites. Also submit your video to StumbleUpon. This social bookmarking site has always been a powerful referrer.

**Comment on other videos**
Whenever you leave a comment on another video, your username and avatar will be visible to everybody on that page, driving more traffic to your videos. Always comment in a way that will reflect well on your brand. Be helpful, insightful or funny and aim to become a well 'thumbed-up' comment that appears for a significant amount of time in the 'Top Comments' section.

**Manage comments effectively**
Be sure to keep a tab on the comments being left on your video via the Community option, found in the Video Manager portion of your account.

Let commenters on your videos know that you appreciate what they have to say, and respond as often as you can. They'll appreciate the time you give to do so. Don't go deleting any negative ones without reply, but do see that your brand isn't being unduly damaged. If you expect a great number of comments, at least try to be around for the first hour or two after publishing so that you can respond to immediate feedback.

**Paid Advertising on YouTube**

YouTube is one of only a handful of websites with over 1 billion monthly active users. With such a large and diverse audience, it makes sense to consider experimenting with paid advertising on the site. Its current model allows you to achieve video clicks for just a few pennies based on keyword and audience targeting, with the potential for very satisfactory cost per acquisition. YouTube ads are fairly cheap; a budget of as little as $10.00 per day should allow you to experiment and collect some valuable data. The following advice relates to the most user-friendly ad setup process for YouTube, accessible via http://www.youtube.com/yt/advertise/index.html. If you would prefer a slightly more advanced approach (including more in-depth setup, scheduling, and targeting options), head straight to the main Adwords dashboard at http://adwords.google.com and choose to launch a new video campaign.

*Most effective YouTube video ad type*

There are several types of YouTube ad available, including traditional banner ads positioned around the site, and other that overlay the videos. My preference, however, are TrueView in-stream video ads - skippable ads that is inserted before, during or after a video on the site (these are the default option in the basic setup method). Not only are they the most engaging ad type with the option to drive clicks to your YouTube channel or website, but you won't be charged if your video is skipped, or if a viewer does not watch at least 30 seconds of your ad.

*Tru-View video ad basics: length and content strategy*

Try to keep your video ads relatively short - 90 seconds or less is a good target; long enough to formulate a compelling visual story, but not too long

that viewers will get bored and skip past it. Experiment with different types of campaign styles to see which resonates best with your audience, but I recommend giving an "Explainer" video a go if you haven't done so before. They're short, often-animated clips that simply and stylishly tell people who you are and what you do. Hiring a professional team to create an explainer video can be costly, but with an imaginative script, a good voiceover, nice sound effects, and some hard work editing or animating, there's no reason why you can't make one yourself. For inspiration, check out the following explainer videos on YouTube: Dollar Shave Club ("Our Blades are F***ing Great"), Airbnb ("How to Airbnb"), and Spotify ("Spotify has landed in the U.S).

*Setting a budget and target audience*

As mentioned above, you don't have to spend a fortune to begin to see if YouTube advertising might work for you. The site will recommend a daily budget, including a maximum cost-per-view (the highest price you’re willing to pay for someone to view your video ad; it starts at just a penny, but obviously the more you bid, the more likely your ad is to be played to someone), but you can enter any amount you like. As with any ad campaign, it's only going to be a success if the right people see it. Under the target audience option, identify where you want your ads to be shown - based on, age, location, interests, gender, and web activity. As you play around with your budget and targeting options, keep an eye on the box that estimates how many views the amount is likely to give your video.

*Tracking the progress of YouTube ads*

When your YouTube ads are live, you can track their performance via your Adwords account. Some of the most important metrics to monitor include Converted views and Cost per Converted view (representing click-through numbers and cost per acquisition), and Video Played To - the percentages show how much of your video ad people watched on average, and help you judge how engaging it is to your target audience. As with all paid advertising on social media, don't be afraid to experiment with different approaches - cull want doesn't work, and concentrate your time and money on what does.

# Instagram Tips:
# Snap-happy Marketing Strategy

Instagram, the fun and quirky image app, has taken the world by storm since launching in October 2010. Hundreds of millions of people use Instagram as a way to transform everyday photos and videos with filters and frames, into memory-laden content, which can then be shared with the world. Chances are that snaps and recordings of your brand are already on Instagram, and all of this content acts as authentic peer-to-peer endorsements of you - essentially free advertising. With a sound strategy of your own, you can only help to compound this effect, increasing brand loyalty and driving sales as a result. Some have even dubbed Instagram "The World's Most Powerful Selling Tool," such is the level of passion its users show. They're young, they're engaged, and many of them are shoppers.

**Note:** While this chapter references Instagram throughout, many of the tips can apply to *any* method of photo-sharing on social media (e.g. uploading images to Facebook and Twitter), as well as micro-video apps such as Vine and Snapchat, which are discussed in other chapters of this book.

**Understand the "Culture of Instagram"**
The top-performing brands on Instagram all have one thing in common: they understand what makes the app unique compared to other social networks, and use this knowledge to their advantage. While the definition of "Instagram culture" will inevitably change over time, at its core are users who are *proud* of the content they post - you won't see hundreds of impulsive selfies and blurry night club photos from the most popular "artists", for instance. As such, there is a definite lean towards quality over quantity, which sees creators taking their time to carefully compose and construct photos and videos, cropping and editing until they are just right so that when an item does eventually get posted to their Instagram feed, it is poured over by impressed followers, complemented with lots of likes and comments, and attracts new fans (*"Wow, these guys post great stuff and get*

*a lot of love; I'm sticking around for more!")* in the process. One of Instagram's central mantras is to encourage people to "find beauty everywhere." For businesses, this means showing how your company sees the world, sharing imagery that pushes people's ideas of you deeper than the common perception, and offering a view into the lifestyle that your product or service makes possible both through your own eyes and those of customers who use them.

In short, whereas visual imagery for sites like Facebook and Twitter might sometimes be more ad-hoc in nature or Pinterest more simple and mood board-y or salesy, your preference on Instagram should be more creative, arty, and *special*, with even more of an emphasis on visual storytelling, turning ordinary situations into artistic moments, and capturing the essence of your brand throughout. Immerse yourself in the culture of Instagram by reflecting this more imaginative style of photos or videos in your own feed (clearly expressing a defined personality and voice and mirroring the attitude and preferences of app's majority audience), and you'll be in a significantly powerful position from the get go.

**What are the elements of a top quality Instagram image?**

As you now know, posting any old photo onto Instagram just won't cut it with the app's savvy audience; you have to be much more inventive and selective. One of the best ways to discover what kinds of photos Instagram really wants brands to post in order to keep fans happy is to look at its recommendations for Instagram ads:

- No heavy use of image filters as a way to mask the "reality" of a shot, and no text overlays are allowed.
- Brands cannot feature their logo in Instagram ads other than as a natural, non-obvious part of the scene.
- Images used as ads must be "true to your brand", i.e. not shocking or cheesy, and no use of gimmicks.
- Photos used for ads should capture "moments", not products. In other words, ads must not just be a shot of your product, but something more creative and inspiring.

- Ads should use ideas and take cues from the existing Instagram community, especially from popular hashtags.

As you read through the rest of the advice in the chapter, keep these ideas in the back of your mind as you think about how you want to shape your own Instagram strategy. As with a lot of social media theory, they won't apply to every situation all of the time, but as a good basis for your activity? Pretty good stuff. By the way, there’s plenty more information and strategy for Instagram ads at the end of this chapter.

## Instagram Profile Optimization

### Optimize your Instagram bio, add a profile photo that fits a circle

One of the easiest ways to connect with would-be Instagram followers is to optimize your bio. Use the whole 150 characters allowed to encourage followers: give them a reason to follow you, tell them what makes you unique, remind people that they'll be among the first to know about special offers and promotions, first to get a sneak peek at new product lines, and have the first chances to enter Instagram competitions to win stuff! Don't forget to add the URL to your website in your bio section too – the only place on Instagram where a link will be directly clickable. Keep the tone light and fun, include relevant keywords (for SEO), an Emoji if the mood fits, and a business-specific hashtag. Interestingly, many companies are deliberately choosing to include a link to their blog instead of a web store, showing how they see Instagram as an opportunity to slowly build their brand image as a whole, rather than "force" people into buying right away.

Equally as important is to add a photo or profile yourself if you're the figurehead of your company (ideally of your smiley face) or, instead, your company logo, as this will represent you all across the service  Like Google+, Instagram (on its mobile app at least) favors a circular profile photo, which suits faces better than it does company logos. If your logo is square and messily cropped when you upload it to your Instagram profile, use my *square-logo-into-circle-fit template* as an easy fix. Grab it via *Premium Content Bundle* chapter of this book.

In late 2012, Instagram rolled out official web profiles for users. Login to your account; your web profile URL will be www.instagram.com/yourinstagramusername. When an Instagram image link is posted to Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, Tumblr and other sites, a user will be directed to your web profile when it is clicked. Web-based profiles mean that these people can comment and/or like the image direct on the web - no mobile app is required. Marketers can use this knowledge as an opportunity to promote more interaction among fans.

**Taking Great Instagram Photos**

The types of images and photos that resonate with Instagram users reflect many of the themes we discussed in "The Best Types of Content to Post on Social Media" chapter of this book (featuring customers, promoting products, going behind the scenes, etc.). Here, you'll find advice about shooting and optimizing images especially for Instagram's dominant user base, but it can also be applied to images across all of social media.

**Only post your best photos, find inspiration from other users**

The best brands on Instagram are extremely picky about the images they post on their accounts - unlike some other social networks (e.g. a gallery of photos of an event you'd post to Facebook), quality definitely trumps quantity where your portfolio is concerned. Take your time in creating a collection of photos that you are really proud of - your very best efforts - as it is this that will catch the eye of users both when viewed as individual pieces of content, and when your gallery is browsed through as a whole. Many of the biggest brands on Instagram post just once per day, sometimes even less.

Here are some basic photography tips and guidelines that will help to lift the quality of your work on Instagram:

*See the world in squares (but don’t fret about it too much)*

Traditionally, photos on Instagram have been squares - like an old Polaroid snap – and this remains the most popular type of composition on the social network. So even before the shutter closes on your widescreen camera view, try and imagine how your composition might appear as a square once the

sides are cropped. However, if there’s a critical element of your content that a square will frustratingly crop out, you’ll be relieved to know that Instagram, in August 2015, added the ability to publish photos and videos in portrait and landscape mode. When uploading content, just tap the format icon to choose the orientation.

*The rule of thirds*

Just with other forms of photography, the ‘rule of thirds’ is deeply rooted in many of the great Instagram shots. Imagine your viewfinder is split into thirds, both horizontally and vertically (or turn on the iPhone Camera grid view via Options); now balance your composition between these areas.

*Get symmetrical*

Symmetrical shots look great with Instagram. You'll finish with a perfect square crop of your image. When taking your photo, the key is to center yourself perfectly and make sure all your lines are dead straight.

*Play with angles and lines*

Instagram is all about encouraging its users to see the world in a new way. We're all so used to viewing the world from head height, so experiment with high and low angles, from behind, or at the side, to add interest and intrigue to your snaps. In addition, think about incorporating lines into your photos - natural elements like a line or trees or a road stretching into the distance - to draw people's eyes into the image, or towards whatever it is you want them to focus on.

*Zoom in on details*

To make the most of the relatively small real estate of mobile devices (where most people will be viewing your Instagram content), make a habit of focusing in on particular details of products or service in order to draw customers in, rather than blander long or mid-range shots. For example, a clothing store might highlight the quality dye and material in a garment, while a decorating service could go a bit more abstract and use the close-up shot of a pot of paint and a brush to represent a job well done.

*Find inspiration*

If you are lacking inspiration, use Instagram's Explore tab (the compass points icon) to see the latest emerging trends on Instagram, and consider implementing them in your own work.

**Brand your images with consistent filters and image editing**
Instagram's popularity blew up, in part, due to the ease at which users can transform ordinary photos with its vintage filters. While these overlays remain central to the app's appeal, over the years, its image editing tools - in response to competition - have expanded to include a variety of additional options for photo-tweaking, including straightening, lux, brightness, contrast, tilt shift, sharpening, and more. Instagram allows you to set the strength of each adjustment with a simple slider. Overall, I'd suggest applying them in a way that is subtle (to align with Instagram's preferred approach for brands, i.e. natural), and decide on a filter that you will use consistently; one that helps image to reflect your brand culture and personality (e.g. fun, playful, serious, professional, etc.) *and* makes your style immediately identifiable within the feed of fans. In order to create a distinctive branded account on Instagram, learn what your fans like about you, and consistently create content around that theme; filters can play a large part in this.

**Note:** Just because the filters are there and everyone is using them, doesn't mean that you have to. In fact, not using them can be a point of differentiation in a sea of heavily-edited photos. The #nofilter hashtag is often used by people as a way to brag about how they didn't need to rely on one-tap overlays to produce a stunning image. Of course, some other slight image adjustments might have been made... but no one need know.

**Consider *not* taking your photos in Instagram**
If you shoot a photo within Instagram, you are instantly locked into using it filters and editing tools. As expansive as these options have become, it is often a better option to shoot a photo with your mobile's native camera app (or any other digital camera). Doing this will provide you with a 'clean' image that can be imported into whichever photo editing app you like (VSCO Cam or Afterlight, for instance - tools that may provide more unique and diverse filter and image editing options). When you're done, you

can then import the photo into Instagram for final tweaking and publishing. This approach is how the pros get such great photos; ones that look so different to anything that Instagram alone can produce. Of course, if Instagram already provides you with the look and feel that you want your photos to have, then that is totally fine as well!

**Headphone trick for perfect focus every time**

Tapping your iPhone's screen to take your shot after you've got the perfect framing and focus can jolt you out of position and blur the image as it's taken. To prevent this, you can use your headphones as a cable release in order to take photos without having to touch the screen. Plug in your Apple headphones, and touch the ‘volume up’ button to take a photo while in the Camera app.

## Instagram Marketing and Content Strategy

**Make the most of the photo caption**

The photo caption that accompanies every image on Instagram exists as a small but crucial part of your marketing strategy - never leave it blank. Use it as a way to anchor the content of the image, and to reflect your brand's personality and tone of voice. Examples of uses for the photo caption include adding a description of the product you are featuring, asking a question or starting a discussion and adding a call to action or including a URL that you want fans to visit. URLs written within Instagram descriptions cannot be clicked on, so make sure that they are short and memorable, using a service like bit.ly to facilitate this if necessary. Related to this point, another popular strategy to drive click-throughs from Instagram captions to a destination of your choice is simply to include a phrase like "click the link in our bio." Your bio is always just one tap away and since the "Website" URL there *is* active, it will save people the time and effort of opening up a separate browser and typing in a URL, if that is their preference. Interestingly, Instagram captions do not have a character limit. Some brands, like National Geographic, use this to make each caption read like a mini magazine article. It's a tactic that, combined with high quality images, keeps viewers immersed in their content for longer, seeing them

more than throwaway snapshots. Need to edit a caption for typos or additional detail? Tap the "..." icon next to your photo and choose "Edit."

**Double-tap to like strategy**
As you scroll through the Instagram feed on your smartphone, you can quickly and easily 'like' a photo by double-tapping it; a white heart icon will pop up to let you know it worked. To unlike a photo, double-tap again. Encourage fans to use this method to easily 'like' your content. One year, Coca-Cola used the slogan "Double-tap to unwrap" alongside a packaged Christmas gift as a way to encourage fans to engage. When the photo hit a set amount of likes, Coca-Cola revealed the hidden present. You can use the same tactic as a method to "unlock" special offers or price discounts on your products or services.

**Hashtag your content, but don't be spammy; jump on trends**
Using #hashtags in your Instagram captions will have the content placed with other photos with the same hashtag and turned into clickable links to see said photo sets. People use hashtags to search for content on Instagram, so using the right hashtags can help to put your content in front of people searching for keywords and phrases associated with your business (words in your description that are not preceded with a hashtag will *not* be taken into account when a user searches). Make it easy for users to find you by ensuring that your hashtags describe your content. General hashtags like #clothes or #food might find you a few followers, but they're widely used and your content will get lost within searches for them, so utilizing more specific and descriptive will provide a much better chance of being found and followed. Alternatively, whole Instagram communities can be built around one actionable, custom-made hashtag - and it's a tactic that works across social networks. Use the company-related hashtag you invent to bring customers together, encourage them to use it, and reward them with likes and comments when they do.

In addition, study the most-used hashtags within your business niche and incorporate them into your own strategy *and* consider taking advantage of popular, but not overdone, hashtag trends on Instagram to help shape your content. A few examples of some of these include #thingsorganizedneatly

(a top-down photo of several related items, e.g. a full outfit or multi-piece tool set, organized in a manner that is pleasing to the eye; often compounded by a use of complementary colors), #fromwhereistand (first-person, top-down shot of a person's feet, with an emphasis on footwear and the ground below in order to tell a story), #onthetable (elegant top-down photos of items on tables, particularly food), and #symmetrysundays (marking the end of the week with an eye-catching symmetrical scene from your store, city, or elsewhere).

As you spend time on Instagram, you will notice how over-the-top hashtag use can be, given that each photo or video can accommodate a maximum of 30. Although this generous limit helps individuals - often desperate for an audience - attract a few more views, I would not recommend so blatant a tactic for business, as it can come across as spammy, dilute your marketing message and damage your brand image. The competitive analysis company, Trackmaven, found that using between 4 and 5 hashtags maximized Instagram interactions, but more than 5 hashtags worsened engagement. Personally - as with Twitter - I think anything over three hashtags per post can start to make the content look a bit messy.

**Note:** As a quick way to discover some of the most relevant hashtags for your updates, visit free sites like Iconosquare (http://www.iconosquare.com) or Websta (http://websta.me), whose tools suggest a list of popular hashtags based on keywords that you enter. Alternatively, within the app, Instagram will auto-complete hashtag suggestions when you search for them. In particular, look out for those in the “Top” category, as these are the ones most often used.

**The power of geo-tagging on Instagram (and a little trick)**

Instagram allows you to geo-tag your photos with the location at which they were taken, which are then added to a Photo Map. When a photo is tagged in this way, Instagrammers who are close to your location or who visit it at a later date will be able to view your photos. The resulting affinity may lead to a follow or a visit to your store, and generally adds a greater sense of place and interest to the snap. On a related note, if your business’ aim is to

target an audience within a specific geographic area, then the Places search tab can help you do that. As well as providing you the opportunity to engage with the Top and Most Recent posts from any location, use what you see as inspiration for publishing the type of content popular with people in a specific area. A stunning landscape shot, a unique take on a popular landmark, a subtle nod to your business and what it offers, etc.

**Note:** Even if you do not have a physical location, Instagram's geo-tagging feature can still have an unconventional use - as extra promotional space. When a geo-tagged photo is viewed either on the app or your web profile, the location given is listed right at the top of the content (just below your username but above the photo or video), and is the *first text associated with your content that a user sees*, particularly if the content's caption is hidden. As an example, the sports brand Puma, which does not have a single dedicated physical location, geo-tags its photos with a random location, but gives that location a *name* associated with the product or message in their photo or video.

**"Regram" other users' photos**
There is no better promotion for your business to new customers than to show photos of existing customers enjoying what you offer. Ask for photos to be submitted to you by happy customers, or - even better - proactively track them down using specific hashtags. When you find an image you would like to use, utilize apps like Regram for iOS or PhotoRepost for Android to share these images on your own feed, and don't forget to tag the person who originally took the image so that they are notified. For example, pen manufacturer Sharpie regularly features sketches drawn by its customers, and Starbucks "piggybacks" on the popularity of Instagram users with large follow bases, reposting images (with permission, of course) that feature their products.

**Schedule posts to maximize the impact of campaigns and promotions**
Scheduling Instagram posts will come in handy if you have a lot of stellar content that you want to post consistently, but can really come into its own as a way to pace and maximize the impact of campaigns or promotions, e.g. posting themed photos at exactly the same time every day, or releasing

contest details at a set time (having trained customers to come back to view both). Instagram does not have a built-in scheduling function, but third party tools like Latergramme (at http://latergram.me and as an iOS app) will allow you to queue content (including caption and hashtags) for posting on a day and time of your choosing. When the moment arrives, you'll receive a notification to open up the official app to complete the publishing process. If you're a Hootsuite user, you'll also be able to publish posts direct to Instagram and manage multiple accounts.

**Instagram contest strategy**

Instagram contests are hugely popular and can provide a quick, cheap, and powerful way to encourage fans to engage with your brand, and spread the word about you across Instagram and beyond. Here are a series of simple steps to help ensure your Instagram contest is a success:

*Choose a prize:* Choose a prize that is unique to your business, e.g. a product or gift card so that you will attract entrants who are genuinely interested in your business, not just in winning an iPad or $500 cash, for example. Also, try to make the size of the prize proportionate to the effort it will take to win it, which leads us onto...

*Decide on an entry method:* Some of the simplest contest entry methods on Instagram include asking fans to like a photo, follow your account, or re-post an image (with an app like Regram or simply screen-grabbing your published photo). You can also decide to advertise a contest held elsewhere, like on your Facebook Page or your website, via your Instagram account, and drive people to those destinations via a memorable shortened URL in your image's caption or a clickable link in your Instagram bio. Alternatively, some of the most common entry methods ask users to post a photo or a video on Instagram in order to be entered; often tied to a particular theme, e.g. food, colors, seasons, their favorite product from your range.

*Build your contest:* When you launch the contest with a post on Instagram, featuring an attention-grabbing title with a short call-to-action will help to

maximize entries, e.g. *“Enter to Win a $100 Gift Card from Sean's Salon!”* A photo of the prize is a great way to entice people to enter to win it. If you’re giving away a gift card, for example, include an image with the gift card value in text and a product that people can buy with it. Write the entry method and prizing info in the description - a paragraph with info about the prize, how to enter and any rules or restrictions for your contest, linked to with a short URL or a clickable link in your bio.

*Monitor progress:* To help gauge the success of your Instagram contest:

- Use hashtags to easily track how many photos are being shared on Instagram that have your contest hashtag (ask fans to use one in the caption for the photos or videos they post as a requirement for entry, but make sure beforehand that your chosen hashtag is unique and hasn't been used by someone else before).
- Set up Google Alerts to monitor mentions of your contest across the web.
- Use Wishpond or Woobox Instagram contest web apps for real-time campaign reports, which allows you to track views, entries, and conversion rates.

*Promote your contest:* In addition to organic marketing of your competition, send an email to your mailing list (these are the people most likely to enter), promote your contest on social networks, and add a banner to the home page of your website. You may also choose to stream contest entries to your website or a custom tab on your Facebook Page based on a specific @mention or hashtag, to help spread the word - the latter can be achieved via a service like Woobox.

*Follow-up actions:* After your contest is over, follow these steps to wrap everything up neatly:

- Showcase winning photos on your Instagram account and other social channels.
- Share a video showing you choosing the winning photo to create excitement.
- Post teasers for future contests on Instagram to keep your followers hooked, keep momentum going, and prime followers

for future contests on your Instagram account.
- Run regular contests on Instagram (weekly or monthly) to get fans into the habit of looking forward to them and entering.

**Share your photos across social media**
One of the best ways to draw more attention to your Instagram activity is to share your Instagram creations to other social media, including Facebook, Flickr and Tumblr. In Instagram's “Sharing Settings” menu (found under the "Preferences" label of your account options), enter your social media usernames and passwords for the various accounts on offer, to make sure your Instagram photos are seen by your various followers on each site when you publish them. For added exposure and social proof of your brand's awesomeness, stream and showcase brand-specific photos based on a specific @mention or hashtag to your website or a custom tab on your Facebook Page with tools like Woobox (http://www.woobox.com) or Pagemodo (http://www.pagemodo.com).

**Embed your Instagram photos and videos**
When you view an Instagram photo or video on your desktop web browser, you'll see a share button on the right-hand side (just under the comments button). Click this button and you'll get an embed code that you can copy and paste into your website, blog or article. Handily, the embedded image or features an Instagram logo, when clicked, will take viewers to your Instagram profile where they can discover more of your content.

**Link to online Instagram Gallery from your own site or blog**
Got a website? Don't forget to add a link to your official online Instagram profile or webstagram (more on these in a later section) from there to announce your Instagram presence to your visitors, especially those browsing on mobiles. If you blog, using your Instagram photos in your blog posts (and linking to your Instagram profile) is another great way of marketing your business to potential followers. In November 2012, Instagram rolled out official Badges that you can embed on your websites to promote your Instagram activity. Sign into your Instagram web account and

choose “Badges” from the left-hand menu. In addition to a set of pre-made badges, there is also the option to download and customize your own icon.

**Leave meaningful comments**
Replying to comments on your Instagram posts with a thank you or a friendly message and commenting on *other* Instagrammers' work is a great way to pepper your username around the app, especially if you are complementing a customer who is featuring your brand or product. To increase the chances that other users will click through to check you out, leave meaningful feedback and interesting comments. Ask questions about how a certain photo was taken, complement the composition, politely provide suggestions to improve a shot, etc. All of this is good karma and will eventually lead to more followers. There are two places you can tag (or @ mention) another Instagram user: in the caption before you publish a photo, and in a comment. To mention someone in a caption, just type @ followed by the username, e.g.@bobthebob. When you publish the photo, the username will be linked to the corresponding profile, and the user will be notified that they were tagged. If you want to reply to someone's comment on a photo, tap and hold the username and select "mention user."

**Note:** Responding to multiple comments within the Instagram app or even on the desktop site *can* be a cumbersome experience. To help relieve the burden, check out the third-party "Instagram for Chrome" browser extension. This little widget allows you to like and comment on photos or videos, get desktop notifications, and see what filters have been used by users.

**Track and analyze your Instagram activity**
While Instagram doesn’t have a native analytics tool, there are plenty of third party options out there, both free and paid. Two of my favorites are Iconosquare (http://www.iconosquare.com) - a free analytics service that provides a variety of metrics for your Instagram account, including your Top 5 most-liked and followed photos, how often you use filters and which are your favorites, and your most engaged followers, as well as management tools like the ability to follow or unfollow users, like and comment on posts, and

use Emoji in comments - and Collect.to (http://www.collect.to) – a platform with both free and paid options that provides you with analytics and data to help you run Instagram campaigns and contests. A paid account provides you with enhanced filtering options for date, hashtags, locations, etc. Whichever you choose, sign in with your Instagram details and use the stats to monitor which of your Instagram activity best resonates with your audience, and use this as a basis for future content. Don’t forget, too, that you can use a service like bit.ly (http://www.bitly.com) to shorten links and track their visits. Links aren't clickable within Instagram photo captions, but they *are* in your Instagram Bio, which you can direct people to via a message underneath a photo or video that you post.

## Recording Video in Instagram

In June 2013, video recording was rolled out to Instagram. The feature allows users to film clips of up to 15 seconds long to share with the app's huge community and across other social media. The following are a selection of tips to help you make the most out of shooting video for Instagram.

### Plan your shoot, record outside of Instagram

As editing on the fly is so limited within the Instagram video app, it is wise to plan your video in advance, and the shots that you will use. Without being forced to record within Instagram, you are free to use your phone's own camera and/or other apps to create potentially more compelling content, before sharing it to a wider audience via your Instagram profile. Some good options include combining your phone's native camera with video editing and filter-adding apps like iMovie, Vintagio, and 8mm Vintage Camera (iOS) and Magisto or Videocam Illusion (Android).

### Your video is how long?!

Although the maximum length of record time for a video clip on Instagram is 15 seconds, you do not have to use it all up in order to post a clip; in fact, the minimum length of a video is just 3 seconds. Considering the way that users engage with social media, 15 seconds is a *lifetime* to spend watching a video - especially if it is purely promotional. In respect of this, I would not

advise that you make your Instagram videos 15 seconds long on a consistent basis. With Vine videos (Instagram's main competition, and discussed in the next section) lasting a maximum of only six seconds, this general time frame, in my opinion, is preferable.

**Jerky camera work? Turn on "Cinema" mode**

One of the features Instagram is most proud of is *Cinema*. With the tap of a finger, Cinema aims to remove as much wobble from your video as possible, making it seem as smooth and professional as if it was filmed by a Hollywood camera operator with a Steadicam. At the same step that you choose a filter for your video, you will notice an icon of a shaky camera. Simply tap this icon to turn Cinema mode on.

**Choose a compelling cover frame**

After you have recorded a video and added a filter, Instagram will ask you to add a cover frame. This will act as a thumbnail for your video in the feeds of your followers and in search results, so use the slider to choose the most compelling still shot available from those provided. The more appealing the image is, the better chance it will catch someone’s eye enough for them to want to check it out!

**Instagram video enhancement**

Instagram video's editing and enhancement options are basic at best, but there exists a whole variety of apps to add a touch of style and distinctiveness to your mobile video efforts - if your video creation exists outside of the Instagram app, that is. Some of my favorites include iMovie (of course), Videohance (iOS), and Vidtrim (Android). The Flipagram app can also be used to stitch multiple photos together in order to create a story-driven slideshow video.

**Experiment with Instagram's Hyperlapse app**

In August 2014, Instagram launched Hyperlapse, an app that allows you to create cinematic, stabilized time-lapse videos on their mobile device - even if you move around while shooting. Simply tap to record (for up to 45 minutes), choose a video speed (up to 12x faster), and share your creation instantly to Instagram and Facebook. It's worth noting that that 3 minutes of

recording sped up at 12x will generate 15 seconds of video, the current limit for videos on Instagram, so plan around this figure or you'll have to trim your footage if you plan on sharing your creation with your Insta-followers. Whether you choose to share right away or not, all recordings are saved to your Camera Roll for, if necessary, further editing and disseminating elsewhere. Coordinate your use of Hyperlapse with other Instagram marketing strategies (e.g. capturing the atmosphere or story of an event, demoing a product, using filters to create an on-brand vibe) to produce captivating and engaging content.

**Note:** As Hyperlapse outputs video at high speed, try to keep your mobile device stable while you record so that changes of direction aren't too jerky - there's only so much that its automatic stabilization can do. Talking of stabilization, the app will crop the edges of your video while achieving this effect, so try to keep your scene/subject in the middle of the frame.

*For more tips about the types of video content that resonate with Instagram users, check out the "Explained: The Best Types of Content to Post on Social Media" chapter of this book.*

**Instagram Direct: Private and Group Messaging**

In December 2013, a new function – Instagram Direct – was rolled out to the app. Instagram Direct is a private and group messaging function that allows users to send photo or video messages to select people – either to a single individual or to groups of up to 15 people at a time. Whereas in the past, any content posted on Instagram was sent to the feeds of everyone who followed you *and* was publicly viewable via your mobile or web profile, Instagram Direct messages do not appear publicly. When you send a message directly (after you take a photo or shoot a video and are done editing, select "Followers" to share the content with everyone or "Direct" to selectively choose who it goes to), you'll be able to find out who's seen your photo or video, who's liked it and also watch the recipients commenting in real time via the "folder" icon that sits at the top of the Instagram home screen. Photos and videos that you receive directly from people you follow will appear immediately in your inbox, but if someone you're not following sends you a photo or video directly, it will be held in

your requests list until you decide that you want to view it. If you choose to view it, further private messages from that user will no longer need approval.

Instagram Direct is primarily being aimed at casual users of Instagram to share messages privately between one another, but brands and businesses can also take advantage of this added functionality. Here are just a few ideas on how:

**Target your most engaged fans by location and demographics**
As you can message up to 15 people privately via Instagram Direct, you can use this as an opportunity to segment and target your audience based on location and demographics. To track down your most engaged fans, browse through your photo stream for the people who most comment and favorite your content, or often tag their friends as a way to spread awareness of your brand. Once you've identified your most active fans, you can formulate different group messages to send to various segments of your audience. Use these as a way to share news on new products, announce giveaways and contests, conduct Q&A sessions, drive traffic to your website, and more. Of course, since these messages will be largely unsolicited, you should be *very sure, and extra careful*, that sending them will not upset people who are most likely to be your biggest brand ambassadors.

**Conduct customer service**
Previously, any customer service issues that arose via Instagram were often forced to be dealt with within the comments section underneath a photo or video. Now, public disputes can be ushered into the more private setting of Instagram Direct. This prevents your comments being clogged up by unsightly feedback and prevents your brand image from being damaged. To make the transition, reply to a complainant in the comments telling them that you will send/have sent a direct message to them to help solve their issue, and then go from there. Photos, videos, and text can be used as a way to help solve problems - choose whichever means of communication works best for you. To further enhance your customer service via Instagram Direct, advertise in your bio that people can contact you privately, and actively monitor negative mentions of your brand via your notifications and

Instagram search to leap on and deal with problems before they get the chance to stew and escalate. You can - similar to Twitter - also explore Instagram for hashtags associated with your product and services, then see if you can offer helpful advice to anyone talking about your area of expertise, as a way to break the ice. Again, this tactic works best if you are quite sure that your "out of the blue" message will not upset the individual in question.

**Offer coupon codes / exclusive deals**

While occasionally sending coupon codes out to all of your Instagram followers is a sound tactic in itself, messaging them to an exclusive group of followers can be even more effective. Make sure that each coupon code you create is unique so that you can track its success easily, and also limit the quantity and set deadlines for their use to encourage their use, and discourage abuse. Tactics include:

Send a direct message including a coupon code to new or milestone followers (e.g. 50th, 100th, 1000th).
Send a coupon code out as an apology for a customer service issue.
Send a coupon randomly to surprise and delight a follower; encourage the recipient to share it with their friends both on Instagram and elsewhere.

**Give ultra-exclusive sneak peeks**

In a very savvy move - and one you can emulate - Kardashian Kollection offered 15 of its followers an exclusive behind the scenes photo from its latest fashion collection. To enter, Instagram followers were asked to screen grab the image which told them of the entry instructions and re-post it with the hashtag #KKDIRECT. The promotion received over 4,000 likes and 650 comments in under 24 hours… and the really clever part? By requesting followers to re-post the entry instructions, they put their fans to work in helping to drive more participants. After the promotion, screen grabs of the private messages being sent to the chosen 15 were posted publically for transparency.

**Run Instagram contests**

Private messaging on Instagram gives you the chance to run more types of competitions via the app, and promotions that can be held "ad-hoc" with smaller prizes. Example strategies include:

Hold a contest where the first person to reply privately with the answer to a question, or post a certain photo, or tweet with a certain hashtag wins a prize, e.g. *“The first 10 people to send us a photo of themselves wearing a Shawn’s Sweater while standing in a bucket will win a $10 gift voucher towards their next purchase!”* or *“The next 5 people to post a video eating at Bob’s Burgers with the hashtag #lovebobs will get a very special Direct message from us…”*
Hold a "friend referral" contest where the winner is the first person to get 5 friends to follow you and mention the username of their referrer in the direct message.
Host a scavenger hunt, where a clue is sent out at a time to an exclusive set of followers, and the next one is only delivered once you receive the correct answer to the first. The winner is the user who reaches the end of the hunt - in the real world or virtually (finding clues hidden on your website, for example) first.

## Advertising on Instagram

Instagram’s history with advertising stretches back to 2013, when it tentatively began to test sponsored content with a select number of big brands, including Ben & Jerry’s, Michael Kors and Mercedes. Over two years of research and experimentation later, in September 2015, the app’s advertising opportunities were opened up to *all businesses*. Ads for Instagram are built via the Facebook Power Editor advertising tool (Instagram, of course, was famously bought by Facebook in April 2012), so you will need to have a Facebook account or access the site through Facebook Business Manager. In this section, we’ll cover some of the essential information you need to craft successful Instagram ads.

### Instagram ad basics

- Instagram ads (which can be a photo or video) appear amongst the ordinary stream of content within the app, identifiable as they are marked “Sponsored.”

- Ads can be created in a square or landscape format.
- All ads will feature a linked call to action button such as “Learn More”, “Shop Now”, or “Install App”.
- The recommended image size for an Instagram ad in the square or landscape format is 1080 x 1080 pixels. The aspect ratio for an Instagram ad in the square format is 1:1. If you use the landscape format, your image or video should have an aspect ratio of 1.9:1.
- Video ads should be no more than 30 seconds long or 30MB in size.
- The caption you use for your Instagram ad will appear below the content and can include up to 300 characters. As a best practice, avoid using URLs in your Instagram ad's text. URLs will not be clickable from your ad's text field.
- Instagram ads should adhere to the same guidelines as Facebook ads, including the 20% text rule.

**Instagram ads best practices**

As you should now be well aware, Instagram is a place people go to discover and become inspired by the images they see. The best practices for ads reflect much of what you have learnt about content marketing on Instagram so far – make ads seamless to the experience, not disruptive. As a business, it is recommended that you focus your Instagram ad campaigns around 3 key objectives: on brand, concept driven and well crafted.

*On brand*

Like organic Instagram content, your ads should be creative showing your brand's personality. Find unique ways to incorporate your brand's logo, icon or a color, but stay consistent with your style between organic and paid content to drive familiarity.

*Concept driven*

When planning your Instagram ad, know what you want to make your audience think and feel, and what your core message is. With that, you’ll find it easier to apply some of the following ideas:

- Tell a story: Take a series of images that tell a story about your brand and share them over a period of time.
- Experiment with visual styles: Use different filters and colour schemes to create a visual mood with your images. You could even use a series of different filters to show a change in mood.
- Develop a theme: Create a series of unique images that all share a common theme, e.g. different events from a single day or an object in a variety of settings.

*Well crafted*

With a bit of practice, anyone can create compelling images for Instagram – ads or not. Here's some ad-specific tips.

- Strong Focal Point: Avoid making your images too complex or busy. Instead, focus on one or two places where you want to draw people's eyes. As a best practice, one focal point should include a brand logo or another brand element that's recognizable to your audience.
- Framing & Balance: Straighten out images to make them look cleaner and consider symmetry, the rule-of-thirds, and other composition basics as you're snapping or shooting.
- Lighting & Detail: Be sure to use clear and high resolution images. Pixelated images and those with bad lighting or other flaws may not perform well.
- Caption and hashtags: Don't forget a compelling tagline and, crucial for Instagram, a selection of on-brand and relevant hashtags.
- Ad guidelines: To avoid your Instagram ads being flagged up and rejected, follow the Facebook Advertising Policies, including the 20% text rule. You can check to make sure your image doesn't have 20% or more of its pixels dedicated to text, by using the grid tool to check your photos.

**Setting up Instagram ads**

To link a Facebook Page to an Instagram account, visit your Page and click Settings. In Settings, click on Instagram Ads and follow the instructions to

add an account for Advertising. You can also create a new Instagram account here if you need to. If you use Facebook Business Manager, you can assign an ad account to an Instagram account by clicking Business Settings > Instagram Accounts > Click Assign Ad accounts. To authorize one or more of your ad accounts to use the Instagram Account, check the box next to each ad account and click Save Changes.

To begin setting up Instagram ads, head to Facebook Power Editor and click the Manage Ads tab at the top of the page. On the left side of the page, click Create Campaign. Click on the dropdown next to Objective and hover over Clicks to Website; choose "Create ads for Instagram." The following ad objectives currently support Instagram ads: Clicks to Website, Mobile App Installs, Video Views. Then, it's just a case of setting up your ad in the same way as you would for Facebook (target audience, duration, budgeting, and all that good stuff). Do check out the Facebook ads section of this book for some tips on these, if you need them. As with all social media advertising, don't jump in without a clear plan of action and always keep a close eye on reporting in order to track the performance of your sponsored content.

# Vine Tips:
# Marvelous Marketing With Micro-Video

Vine is a Twitter-owned micro-video app that launched at the beginning of 2013. It allows users to record short, six-second video clips that play in an endless loop. These creations can be shared across social media; their brevity and scope for creativity makes them a great marketing tool for business. Many of the Instagram and Snapchat tips in this book (both for images and video) also work well for Vine, but this chapter highlights a variety of Vine-specific strategies that you can employ.

**Note:** Don't forget to grab a custom Vine web URL, available once your account is older than 30 days and has more than two posts. Once you select an available URL you will be able to access your profile on the web by visiting http://vine.co/*yourchosenurl*. To register a custom Vine URL, point your browser to https://vine.co/profiles, then log in with your Vine username and password. You can choose your custom URL via the Settings menu, but make sure you get it right as you won't be able to change it again after it is set. On the Vine mobile app Settings, meanwhile, you can customize your profile with one of a number of colors, and link your Twitter account to Vine. If you connect your Vine and Twitter accounts, your Twitter username will appear on your Vine profile and in other places throughout the app, like in Vine Messages. People will be also able to search for your Twitter handle to find you on Vine, and they can confirm your Vine account is actually yours. When someone taps your Twitter username, they'll go straight to your Twitter account — and they can follow you there. An additional setting will let you choose to show and link to your Vine account from your Twitter profile. When people to go your Twitter profile, they'll see our icon alongside your total loops (plays) of Vine videos. When they tap that link, they'll be taken straight to your account on Vine.

## 5 ways for brands to make viral Vine videos

As with much of social media, some of the most shareable content by brands on Vine is *not* overtly self-promotional; the best results come from mirroring the content of Vine's majority audience and driving interest in your company through positive association with the clips that you publish, and genuine and sincere interactions with your fans. Here are 5 ways to help shape your Vine content for maximum impact:

*Be funny and inventive*

Amongst the most popular tactics for Vine humor are "My reaction when" videos (which show a sharp eye for the outcome of amusing situations), parodies of common everyday occurrences or events in popular culture, or clips of cute animals and children. Others feature cool trick or effect - all cut together within six seconds. If your clip is emotive enough to make someone want to pass it on to their friends, you're definitely on the right path. To give you a good idea of where to begin with your strategy, search YouTube for "Best Vine compilations" and you'll find a huge pool of inspiration from which to garner your own ideas.

*Be useful*

The American home improvement store, Lowe's, won major plaudits for its "Fix in Six" Vine campaign, which demonstrated a variety of how-to tutorials in short, beautiful, stop-motion animations - everything from removing water stains with a lemon to preventing squirrels from stealing your bird feed. Think about how you can use Vine to provide similar value to your audience with simple tips and tutorials.

*Collaborate*

If you can mix it with influencers within your field on Vine, you'll be well on the way to expanding your audience and reach. Some of the big brands pay huge sums of money to "Vine celebrities" with millions of followers to appear in their clips, but arranging to collaborate with related businesses or peers on your Vine content (where you appear on their account and them on yours) can turn out to be mutually beneficial.

*Feature your customers*

This one works just as well on Vine as it does with lots of other social platforms. If you can encourage customers to create content that features your product or service (either just by asking or as part of a contest, for example), then essentially you'll have them doing your selling for you. As you do this, make sure to have these clips @mention your username and feature a specific hashtag so that you can find them easily. To make your customers feel special and to encourage further sharing, revine (re-post) said clips onto your own Vine feed.

*Be shareable and encourage sharing*
Although there's a chance that your Vine content will go "viral" and be successful (whatever that amounts to in your niche) on its own, there's no harm in giving it a helping hand. So, don't forget to share your Vine clips to Twitter (where the video will play within the news feed), or even convert and re-purpose it for an audience on Facebook and Instagram if the initial signs are good.

## Technical considerations to make Vine videos shine

### Think before you press record, save and edit sessions

Unlike snapping a photo or taking a quick video recording on the fly as you might do for a post to Facebook or Twitter, Vine videos work best when they are each planned and crafted as a mini project in their own right. With this in mind, it is important that you think about what video you want to make before you begin. Without wanting to make anything too complicated, it might even be useful to sketch out or list a quick storyboard of shots in advance. Plan what you will film, the angle and composition of the shots, and how long you want each shot to appear for, in order to produce the best end result.

Up until October 2013, recording with Vine used to be a one-take process: press and hold to record a clip, let go to stop, then repeat as many times as required - but the introduction of two new functions have changed all of that for the better. The Sessions mode allows you to save any recording and come back to it later, *and* you can work on up to ten posts at once. To save a new session or open an existing one, tap the icon that looks like a sheet of

paper in the bottom-right corner of the app. Time Travel, meanwhile, allows you to remove, reorganize or replace any shot within a recording session before you share it. Tap the green bar from the camera while you're shooting, or tap 'Edit' when you're previewing a post.

**Consider lighting and stillness**

It might sound obvious, but Vine videos work best with proper lighting and a series of steady shots. This is even more important if you are a brand that is creating Vine videos to show off your products or services. These few extra moments of consideration - looking for a suitable place to shoot your videos, and even investing in a tripod to help keep your mobile-captured shots steady - could make all the difference to how successfully your Vine videos are eventually received.

**Improving sound recording strategies**

While you may not want to include sound in some of your Vine videos, the app will always record audio when it is being used. There are several ways that you can improve the quality of the audio in your Vine videos - from using a pair of ordinary headphones with a built-in microphone for better recording of your own voice, to an add-on directional microphone to better record the voices of others. For near-silent videos (other than telling everyone in the vicinity to pipe down!), placing your phone in a heavy duty weatherproof case often does the job.

**Train your tapping finger!**

As you know, every tap or press of the screen in Vine tells the app to record. With practice, you can easily squeeze 140 taps into one Vine, thus producing a video that is almost 24 frames per second. To make your tapping as efficient as possible, there are a few things you can do:

- Have dry, clean hands. Moisture on your tapping digit will cause the phone's screen to register a longer tap.
- Add a protective screen cover. They seem to allow for the smallest recording taps.
- Tap delicately! Hard taps may cause your phone to shake, which can ruin your video!

### How to prevent auto focus in the middle of videos

The auto-focus function of mobile devices is unpredictable at the best of times; it can often cause an unwanted pulsation in the middle of a Vine video as the device attempts to re-focus on a subject. To prevent this from happening, set your phone down on a flat surface, use a tripod or hold your phone very still by bracing your arms against your chest as you record. However, if your subjects are moving a lot, none of these techniques may work.

## Making unique Vines to help them gain attention

### Tell a story

Vine's stop-start recording style gives you, as a creator, a lot of scope for experimenting with different types of shots and filming styles; don't be afraid to experiment. Although you only have six seconds, this is still ample time to introduce a beginning, middle and end to your clip; build tension and atmosphere; show subjects from multiple perspectives, and lots more.

### Make a stop-motion animation

The standard frame rate for most smartphone cameras is approximately 30 frames per second, which gives you plenty of scope to construct some pretty awesome stop-motion animations on Vine within its six-second video length limit. This type of video can be extremely powerful and has been adored by people since the dawn of cinema, through to the advent of children's television and beyond to the current day. Vine's Ghost mode makes perfecting each frame of your stop-motion animation much easier, too. Simply tap the little ghost icon in the bottom-right corner of the app to see your last scene, which will be lightly overlaid on your current view.

### Make an infinite loop

All videos in Vine loop infinitely when played, so use this to your advantage to create a video that rolls seamlessly. Instead of a video that ends abruptly (e.g. a cat jumping off a table onto the floor), try to find a way to smoothly transition the end of your video so that it naturally flows back to the beginning of the looped video. What you'll end up with is a

mesmerizing six-second advert for your brand that viewers will want to watch over and over again.

**Make a sound-only video**

This tactic can be very effective, as it builds anticipation and forces your audience to engage with your video and use their imaginations to figure out what is happening. For example, you could have a black or white background with nothing but the sound of footsteps approaching, the sound of a marching band or the ticking of a clock - whatever you wish, really - followed by a mention or image popping up of your brand and tagline.

**Make a 360-degree video**

One of the coolest-looking types of Vine videos is a 360-degree swoop around a subject; it works great for showing off products, buildings and almost any other inanimate object. To pull it off, place a small piece of sticky tape to your phone's screen and mark it with a black dot. When recording, use this black dot as a reference point to make one short recording, move to the next position, and record again, as a way of making your circular path line up nice and level. To add an extra layer of smoothness and stability to the production, strap your camera to something like a glass tumbler or a toy car to act as a makeshift camera dolly.

**Use panning to add drama to your videos**

Panning is a technique that is often used to add drama to a scene, and you can easily replicate it using Vine. Walking slowly alongside your subject works fine, but if you want a really smooth shot, consider placing your phone on top of a toy with wheels, or a table dolly.

**Make transitions and an open/close shutter effect**

To add transitions between scenes in your Vine videos, hold and record a dark piece of paper or card over your lens to create a black screen between shots. Similarly, to create a cool "reveal" effect (as if opening or closing a camera shutter) hold a piece of paper over your mobile's lens, start recording, and then remove it quickly so that the light floods into the lens - it kind of looks like a Polaroid developing!

**Feature relevant hashtags in your Vine video captions**
Like Twitter and Facebook, Vine makes use of #hashtags to allow users to group similar types content together, and could get your videos found more easily in search results. The Twitter chapter of this book has much more detailed information about the best use of hashtags but, in general: when adding hashtags to the caption of your video (in addition to a description featuring a couple of keywords you want to target) keep them relevant, keep them short, and don't go overboard with the amount that you use.

**Create an enticing "cover photo" for sharing Vines to Twitter**
In October 2013, Twitter updated the way that Vine videos shared to the site appear in its news feed. Where previously a user had to click a plain link to reveal the Vine video, now a portion of the video appears directly *within* the news feed, giving users a taste of what to expect when they spot it. The preview that appears shows the *top half of the first frame of the Vine video you share*. With this knowledge, you can plan ahead and use the first-recorded frame of your clip to create a "cover photo" that will represent your content when it is shared on to Twitter. This can be as simple as a video title or a dramatic thumbnail that entices viewers to click - take a look at how custom thumbnails are chosen for effect in the YouTube Tips chapter of this book and follow suit. When you shoot your "cover photo," just make sure the detail you want to show is within the top half of the frame so that it displays as you would like it to on Twitter.

## Private Messaging on Vine

In April 2014, a private messaging function - Vine Messages (or VM) - was introduced to the Vine app. To create your own Vine message (VM), select the “Messages” option in the navigation menu, record a video and then send it to one or multiple contacts; every individual message will create a separate, private conversation between you and the recipient. Your messages inbox has two sections: Friends (contacts on the app) and Other (people outside your network). Over time, you'll need to keep an eye on both for messages from customers. Vine Messages can be used for a number of different business purposes, including to deal with customer service issues, to offer ultra-exclusive discount codes to loyal fans, and to

accept contest entries. For more detail on how best to carry out these strategies, mirror the strategies outlined in the Instagram Direct section of the *Instagram Tips* chapter of this book.

# Snapchat Tips: Self-Destructing Social Media Marketing

The mobile app, Snapchat, launched in September 2011, is a photo and video-sharing service centred on one simple premise that is worlds apart from its rivals: all messages shared between friends via Snapchat will self-destruct, never to be seen again. In most cases, photo and video messages - Snaps - will disappear between one and ten seconds after being opened by a recipient (the time limit is specified by the sender), and if the Snap is not opened, it will automatically delete itself after 30 days. The only exceptions to this rule are a "one-time repeat per day" option for any single snap, and Snapchat Stories. Before sharing content with fellow contacts, Snapchat users have the option to add filters, and annotate photos and video with colorful text and markers.

While media shared via Snapchat only exists for a matter of seconds, if you switch your thinking to view the time limit as an *opportunity* rather than a limitation, there are plenty of ways that it can be used for effective marketing. Think about it this way: when a customer is notified of a Snapchat message from you, first they're excited about what mystery it holds and secondly they know that as soon as they open it, they need to pay close attention as it will soon disappear forever. And if they don't keep checking the app daily, they'll miss messages, creating sense of urgency to keep up with fleeting information, and often – it's addictive! By today's standards, 10 seconds of someone's *undivided attention* like this - especially on a medium as personal as mobile - is gold dust. Like all social media, the best Snapchat content is framed in a way that mirrors the style that the majority of its users take advantage of the platform. Where Snapchat is concerned, this involves humor, sharing secrets, having fun, holding small conversations, and capturing "shareworthy" moments: the promise of one-of-a-kind, real-time content is your customer's incentive to follow you, even if they already do on other channels.

Snapchat is best for businesses whose audience is young – teens and twenty-somethings dominate the platform. By May 2014, it had over 70 million active monthly users sending over 400 million snaps daily. Let's look at some ways that you can make the most of Snapchat for your business…

**Ask simple questions**

As the ability to type long text replies is limited by time and space on Snapchat, the best kind of questions to ask are those that are easy to digest and demand a visual response, either by photo or video. For example, a shoe brand might ask their fans something as simple as "Show us your shoes!" or "Snap us a photo when you're in store!" The quicker and easier you make it for fans to respond, the better.

**Have fun, be funny**

Snapchat's majority audience is teenagers and young adults, and the app is dominated by fun and humorous pieces of content. If your brand image allows, don't be afraid to have a little fun - pull faces, doodle on top of your snaps, use Emoji to tell a story, or surprise your audience with something that might raise an eyebrow or two! If you can capture the imagination of fans in this way, the more likely they are to keep opening the snaps you send... which means the odd promotional one, too.

**Show sneak previews**

Snapchat media's brevity makes it a great platform for showing a sneaky peak behind the curtain of your business, whether it's news of a new product launch, an upcoming offer, or something else exclusive only to your friends on the app. If needs be, tease out the content over the course of several snaps to keep it digestible and to encourage people to look out for more. MTV UK used this marketing method several times to preview photo stills and video clips from the new season of its reality television show, *Geordie Shore.* The content was memorable and impactful, reminding people to watch the program and visit its website.

**Offer coupons and special offers**

Use Snapchat as a way to send out time-limited coupons or special offers to your customers. As the promotion will be seen so briefly, make sure that your message is extra clear and succinct, e.g. "10% off today only with promo code SNAP" *and* consider sending out a “heads-up” snap to alert people to the day and time that a promotion will be landing in their inbox. The 16 Handles ice-cream chain put an interesting spin on this strategy. First, they asked customers to send them a photo via Snapchat of them eating the chain's ice-cream. 16 Handles would then reply with a coupon code for money off their next purchase. The customer had to keep the self-destructing message unopened until they placed their order at the register, then quickly show the cashier the coupon to receive a discount.

**Hold a Snapchat contest**

As you know, contest can be a highly effective way to boost engagement and awareness of your brand on social media, and it is no different on Snapchat. Here are several methods you can use:

*Scavenger hunt:* Share photo or video clues to a secret destination, either in the real world or online, and allow your followers to compete to be the first to find it.
*Word or picture quiz:* Send out word or picture clues over a set period of time, building up to a way that followers can win a prize, e.g. visiting a special page on your site to enter a keyword revealed over the course of a week, or by sending back a specific snap.
*First snap wins*: Send out a photo or video asking followers to snap back something specific or tweet you a screen grab from a snap, and the first one to do it wins a prize.

**Take advantage of Snapchat Stories**

The Snapchat Stories mode allows you to join multiple snaps together to create a rolling 24-hour reel of content for *all* of your followers to enjoy again and again. When any snap added to your story ages over 24 hours, it disappears and must be replaced with new photos or videos if you want the story to remain active. If no new content is added to your story, it will disappear once the newest piece of content expires, and a whole new story

will need to be created. To add content to a story, just choose the ‘+’ icon after taking a photo or recording a video with the app.

While the previous Snapchat content strategies in this chapter allow you to specifically target individuals, stories are more of a “catch all” approach that give followers a better opportunity to view collections of snaps multiple times, and they also act as a central hub to which you can direct fans when you want them to engage with your Snapchat efforts over a prolonged period of time and enjoy a more substantial narrative of events. For example, the Washington Wizards basketball team uses stories to document its match days, making snaps that show the players arriving, a glimpse of the locker room, half-time fun, and the result at the end of the game. Similarly, the fashion brand Jack Wills employs stories to allow its fans to tag along all day at photo shoots for its newest ranges of clothes, while the online food-ordering service GrubHub uses stories to give its fans extra time to catch its latest promotion blasts and coupon codes.

**How to grow your Snapchat following – Snapcodes and friend referrals**
Other than the obvious "market your Snapchat presence and username everywhere" (following is made easy courtesy of your profile’s Snapcode, which when photographed by a customer using the app’s built-in camera, will add you automatically – grab an editable, printable version at https://accounts.snapchat.com/accounts/snapcodes), one of the simplest ways to encourage the growth of your audience on Snapchat is to ask existing followers to encourage their friends to add you on the app. When asking existing fans to refer their friends, make sure you get them to snap you the name of the friend who will be adding you, and when they do, send both users a little reward as a thanks (discount code, unique content, etc.)

**Combine Snapchat with other social channels**
Given Snapchat's fluid and destructive form of messaging, it often helps to combine the app with other social networks as a way to switch up or more easily preserve the momentum of your strategy. For example, you could launch a contest using a Snapchat story, but ask fans to submit their entries to you via Instagram or Twitter, using an @mention and a specific hashtag.

Not only would this help you tell how effective your Snapchat marketing is, but also provide some extra exposure on other social networks.

**How to track customers on Snapchat and measure ROI**

Unlike some of its rivals, Snapchat does not yet feature a dedicated set of tools for businesses to manage and track detailed analytics on the app – you can only see how many people viewed your Stories, and how many people took a screenshot of one. Since this is a task most brands will want to carry out, some out-of-the-box thinking is needed until a time when official means of carrying it out is possible. Here's one strategy that I suggest:

1. In a spreadsheet, list every user who adds you as a friend on Snapchat (use the Snapchatters Who Have Added Me menu to find them), and in the adjacent column, enter the date that they added you. Update this list once per day.
2. After updating the list, send out a welcome message to the people who added you as a friend within the last 24 hours. Thank them for adding you as a friend and tell them to look out for an offer from you soon. In a new column on your spreadsheet called "Welcome Message," add a check mark next to the users who have received a welcome message.
3. Within 48 hours of a new user adding you as a friend, send out one or more offer snaps to them depending on how much space you need. In it, feature a specific discount code, hashtag, or shortened URL that you can track visits to or mentions of, e.g. 10% off their first order with code X or free shipping if they tweet with the hashtag #X, etc. If you think your customers will be receptive to it, point them to a sign-up form for your newsletter, too. In a new column on your spreadsheet titled "Offer," place a check mark to all new fans who have received the offer snap.
4. Schedule and send out more general pieces of content to all of the fans who have received welcome and offer snaps in order to keep them familiar and engaged with your brand on Snapchat. Mark these as sent next to the relevant usernames in your spreadsheet, then repeat from the beginning.

**Note:** If you're feeling brave, you can create multiple welcome and offer messages to A/B test which ones work the best, and continue to tweak them until your initial snaps are optimized. I'll be the first to put my hands up and say that this is not the most efficient or eloquent of solutions for measuring the success of Snapchat marketing, but it's one of the simplest and effective available to us so far.

**Quick and effective Snapchat content creation tips**

To make the most of visuals on Snapchat, do this first: Navigate straight to Settings (cog icon), tap "Manage" under the Additional Services option and turn on Filters, and Special Text.

1. After taking a photo, swipe left or right to overlay a handful of filters, a time stamp, and the current temperature. For the latter two filters to work, make sure that Location Settings are enabled in the main Settings of your mobile device.
2. Need to access the black or white paintbrush when doodling? Place your finger over the color palette and drag down towards the bottom of the screen until the black hue appears, or - similarly - hold your finger down and drag it off to the left of the screen to enable the white brush.  In addition, you can make text captions big and bold by tapping the "T" icon. Tap twice (in either mode) to center it.
3. To add background music to video snaps, begin playing a track on your mobile (either one saved to your device or streamed in an app like Spotify), then open Snapchat and begin recording – the portion of the track that plays during the recording will be dubbed into the video automatically.
4. After taking a photo or shooting a video, click the "download arrow" icon to save the media to your mobile device. Media can be shared to other social networks to promote your Snapchat content, like attaching it to a tweet or Facebook post, creating an album of Snapchat photos to tell the story of a day, or stitching video clips together to create a vlog for uploading to YouTube.

# Blogging Tips: Captivate With the Written Word

Although maintaining a blog doesn't constitute as social networking in the most modern sense, blogging as a practice can so often act as the cornerstone of a great social media marketing strategy, that I really wanted to include it in this book. As a central and stable hub for sharing detailed and valuable information with your audience (and having them share it onwards), a blog is not only a fantastic way to build authority within your business niche, but also a place to re-purpose social media content, amplify your brand's voice, personality, and core values, *and* ultimately sell to a legion of engaged customers. When people share your content, Google listens - the more your blog posts are shared, the better your site will rank in search engines, and the more traffic will find its way to you. Of course, there are a *ton* more factors that go into making a blog successful, such as website SEO, plugins, copywriting skills, and more - way more than I can cover here. Instead, this chapter will explore some of the ways that you can prepare your blog for *social* world, and reveal some of the best types of content to create in order to captivate your audience.

**Integrate social sharing into your blog, include a call to action**

No blog worth its salt will forgo the installation of good, clear social sharing widgets to allow users to easily share its content to the biggest social networks including Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest. Even the best bloggers in the world don't have their work found without a little help from their readers, so you need to empower people to *easily* share your blog posts with their social connections. Visit any popular blog and you'll see an array of social sharing options above or below (or above *and* below) each post, often coupled with a call to action to encourage people to hit "Like", "Tweet" or "Share." There are plenty of ways to install and customize the way your blog's social sharing buttons display (some of which we've already covered earlier in the book), but one of the easiest and most popular options is through AddThis (http://www.addthis.com), which is a plugin that will place the buttons on your page in just a few clicks. As well as the established social media sharing options, provide a 'Subscribe via RSS' button in a prominent place on your page, so that people can have your posts pushed to them in their Google Reader or RSS feed as soon as soon they are published.

Ways to encourage social sharing and encourage engagement also extend to the blog content itself, whether it's through pre-populated tweets containing valuable snippets of the article's information (ClicktoTweet (http://clicktotweet.com/ will facilitate that), or teasing the article but not revealing *all* of it until they share your link (the WordPress plugin Social Locker does this). As the latter requires people to act before they have even read your content, I would use it with great caution - reserved for premium content you believe people will desperately want to see.

**Produce top content, make some of it evergreen**

First and foremost, always aim to produce inspiring and educational content on a regular basis that is *shareable*. At the core of many great blogs is a set of evergreen posts (articles that will never go out of date, or are updated periodically to make sure that they won't). Evergreen blog posts can act as the backbone of your brand and its expertise online, position you as an authority figure with your finger on the pulse, and help to drive interest in your company. The types of evergreen posts that do best include articles that are written to help beginners (the people most likely to be searching online for assistance), e.g. *"The Complete Beginner's Guide to Choosing Your First Electric Car,"* and ones that answer FAQs, e.g. *"Is Paragliding Safe? Here's Everything You Need to Know."* As I mentioned above, be sure to revisit these posts from time to time to keep them up to date and *the* definitive online resource for whatever the topic might be. To promote evergreen content and give site visitors a clear point of reference, think about creating something like a “Start Here” page, a menu link to training guides, or a "Top posts" widget in the sidebar of your site.

**Write effective headlines: be clear and concise**

Learn to write keyword-rich headlines that will make people want to read the rest of your article, especially if all they have to go on is the blog post title they see in a list of search results or within a tweet. Don't try to be too clever or cryptic with your headlines; be as clear and direct about what the post will offer someone who might come across it, e.g. *"Hot or Cold? The Experts Tell All"* is pretty ambiguous next to something like *"Hot or Cold Water? Expert Opinion on How to Shower*." Some tried and tested ideas for powerful headlines include asking questions, e.g. *"How Do I Craft Amazing Blog Post Headlines?"*, teasing content to attract click-throughs, e.g. *"When one man's son was on the brink of flunking college, three words changed his whole life around..."*, or making references that tie your content into readers' interests or scenarios they often encounter, e.g. *"This is how America's #1 Mom Potty Trained Her Kids in 24 Hours."* Think about which keywords your customers will be using to find the content that you provide; replicate them in your blog post titles. For example, a

customer is much more likely to search for *"how to bake chocolate cake recipe"* rather than *"Omnomnom, check out our great chocolate cake recipe"*. So your heading might read, *"Recipe: How to Bake A Delicious Chocolate Cake."*

**Popular blog post frameworks for highly-readable posts**

Sometimes you'll have the best idea for the subject of a blog post, but trouble in finding a way to structure it in a way that is concise, clear, and easily read by your audience. Here are a variety of common ways to give a framework to your blog post ideas:

*Versus posts*

The power of the Internet has given consumers more choice than ever when it comes to buying products and services, or deciding between one idea or another, so much so that the decision is often overwhelming. A great way to solve this dilemma, and put together a great blog post, is the X vs. Y article. For example, a company that specializes in beds and mattresses might write a blog post explaining the pros and cons of sprung mattresses as opposed to memory foam. Similarly, *"What is the best X?"* types of posts work in a similar fashion. These types of posts help consumers make a sound decision, make you stand out as a trustworthy authority figure - and are easy to put together.

*Problem-solving posts*

One of the main reasons that people search online is to find solutions to their problems, whether it be how to sew a button back on to their shirt, how to house train their dog, or how a guy makes himself irresistible to the opposite sex. Focusing on the solution to problems, especially for businesses, is a great way to come up with new ideas for blog posts and attract web traffic. Think about the problems that your customers want to solve - and then use your expertise to tell them how you (or your business) can help. To use dogs as an example, a pet store owner might blog about the best way to stop your dog from barking, or how to teach it to sit or fetch. Think about how you can become an invaluable resource for your customers *and* for those searching for solutions to their problems on the Internet.

*List posts*

‘List posts’ are extremely popular in almost any industry, as they can be read quickly and are great for sharing, e.g. *10 Top Marketing Tips For Your Blog*. There are three common types of list post: Brief list posts are long, bulleted snippets of information that users can use as a platform to search for

more detailed information elsewhere (sometimes useful, but not always the best way to keep readers engaged on your site!); detailed list posts provide more complex, valuable information - like these tips, and hybrid posts lie somewhere in the middle.

*Break news, offer opinion, and ask questions*

Writing blog posts about breaking news within your industry sector is not only one of the best ways to come up with new and original content, but it also positions you as an authority figure in the eyes of readers. However, rather than simply regurgitating a press release or something you found on a big news site, frame your story in a way that makes it relevant to your audience, positions you as an authority, and encourages people to interact: offer an opinion, and ask readers to share their own as a way to drive engagement. One of the easiest ways to illicit a response is to close your blog posts with a simple request, e.g. *"What do you guys think? Tell us in the comments*" You'll be surprised how much interaction this garners, especially if the question you ask is simple and quick to answer.

*Spin hot or detailed topics into multiple posts*

One of the biggest challenges that many bloggers face is creating fresh content, week in, week out. One of the techniques you can use to combat this is called "spinning". In a nutshell, it involves taking one important topic that you know your audience will lap up, and writing about it from a variety of different standpoints. Let's take an article about painting a garden fence, for example. Several different blog posts about that one topic might be: *'A Beginner's Guide to Painting A Garden Fence'; '5 of the Biggest Garden Fence Painting Mistakes'; 'Video: How to Paint A Garden Fence in 5 Easy Steps',* or *'How [Brand X] is Revolutionizing Garden Fence Painting'*. Get the idea? Drilling down on individual topics like this (as opposed to being more general) may be beneficial in terms of attracting people hunting for more specific information or advice.

*Guest posting*

Offer to write guest posts on other influential blogger's blogs, and provide a link back to your own blog at the bottom of the post in return, as part of the agreement. This is particularly useful if you manage to post on a blog that is much more popular than yours! As well as guest posting on other blogs yourself, be open-minded about other experts posting on yours, to help build a strong network of friends within your industry.

*Celebrate milestones*

As traffic to your blog grows, celebrate this in specific blog posts, thanking readers for their continued support. Use these posts to highlight your most popular content so far, to encourage new readers to go back and revisit, increasing page views and time on your site.

**Note:** In an online world packed with strong opinions, research-backed blog posts are often more persuasive (and therefore popular) than those that are solely story based. For this reason, quoting authoritative resources, citing statistics and studies, or even showcasing your *own* data, can be an effective way to back up your arguments, emanate credibility, and create stellar blog content that stands out from the competition. For example, which blog post title would you be most likely to click on from the following: *"How to Run Faster and More Efficiently" or "How to Run 20% Faster and More Efficiently in 4 Weeks"*? Where the circumstances call for it, the data-backed title will always win out.

**Use awesome images in your blog posts**

As I discussed in the *Facebook Tips* chapter of this book, social networks like Facebook (and Google+) will pull in a photo from your blog to display when someone shares your blog link. If the photo is poor (or there isn't one at all), then there is little chance of your plain link catching the eyes of people browsing through their news feeds. One blog post image is good, but several are even better. Multiple images within a blog post help to break up long blocks of text, make your articles more memorable, and can be used to enhance a written fact or opinion. Check out the *"Explained: The Best Types of Content to Post on Social Media"* chapter for advice on where to find, and how to use, great images.

**Note:** Adding alternative text (alt-text) to images is not just important for search engine optimization (they can't see pictures, but do grab the text and include it in image searches), but it also acts as the description of images pinned to Pinterest. Alt-text is what pops up when you hover your cursor over an image, and it can be edited in the image upload process on most blogging platforms, including WordPress and Blogger.

**Encourage email subscriptions**

The harsh truth is that when someone has visited your blog once, there is a good chance that they will not return for a second visit. To combat this, you need to position yourself to target these people in future at a location where it is hard to ignore you - their email inbox. By gathering email addresses,

you have a ready pool of willing contacts with whom you can share new blog posts and updates, and slowly help to convert them into more passionate brand ambassadors. As well as placing a box for people to sign up to your newsletter in a prominent position on your home page, *also* add a sign-up box to the bottom of a handful of your most popular blog posts from the past (use Analytics to find out which these are). Be sure to let visitors know what they are signing up for before they hit 'Submit' so that your emails are not considered spam, and consider including a discount code or free gift (like a PDF guide) as a way to sweeten the deal.

**Add names, titles and bio to build authority and trust**

It is common for readers to want to contact and communicate with the author of a great blog post after they have finished reading it - and not just in the comments section. Bios and bylines also add authority and trust to the blog post with which they are associated, so be sure to include your name, title, and contact information at the bottom of each of your blog posts, so that customers can follow or contact you.

**The blog post length**

There is always plenty of debate about the optimum length of a blog post, particularly when you are dealing with an audience who is short of time, who can easily look elsewhere, and are forever skimming quickly through content. I would suggest forgetting about the word count, at least to a degree. Instead, focus on creating interesting, well-formatted content that web and mobile readers will love, whether it takes 100 words or 1,000 (do note, however, that long form content generally has less competition). Don't let worries about the length of your post dictate its overall quality.

**Use descriptive URLs for SEO**

For improved SEO, ensure every blog post URL is descriptive rather than just functional, e.g. www.yoursite.com/10-top-blogging-tips-for-business.htm instead of www.yoursite.com/post345.htm. On most blogging platforms, the URL is normally generated from the words used in the blog post's title. If you are able to edit the URL to make it even more optimized for SEO, and you think it can be improved over what has been automatically generated, go ahead and do it.

**The ‘deep linking’ and ‘linking to other sites’ trick**

Whenever you refer to a previous blog post while writing, be sure to add a hyperlink to it, so that readers can go back and check it out. On that note, you want readers to stay on your page as long as possible, so if you link outside of your website for any reason, be sure to set the link to open in a new window.

**Comment on other blogs**

One of the best ways to promote your own blog is to comment on articles in other blogs within your niche. Many blogs allow you to add a URL when you post (normally making your name clickable in the comment when it is published) - a great opportunity to network, as well as add a link back to your blog. On that note, try to be the first commenter on popular related blogs, so that your name and website is the first that other commenters see. Make your comment complementary to the blog in question, or interesting or insightful, so that readers are more likely to take notice of it and tempted to click through to your content.

**Make your blog mobile-friendly**

As ever-increasing numbers of people browse the web using smartphones and tablets, they are hugely significant in the way you design your blog's visual layout and write its content. Some of the biggest free blog providers (including Blogger and WordPress) will automatically display their blogs into a mobile-friendly format, so make sure yours does too. From a mobile user’s view, there is nothing more off-putting than clicking onto a blog, only to have to keep zooming and scrolling to read the text. Try to avoid writing in long and complex sentences, and avoid extremely long paragraphs at all costs. Web readers have a limited attention span and skim articles, but mobile users are likely to be even more distracted. If you are writing a long post, be sure to break it up into short paragraphs with individual headings in order to make it as digestible as possible.

**Share and re-purpose your blog post for maximum exposure**

*Get shares from industry influencers*

Not all shares are created equal. If you want to encourage your awesome blog content to be a runaway hit, think about how much easier this would be if you could get influential people within your field to share your link with their hundreds or thousands of loyal fans. The best way to go about this is to work backwards. Spend time building a relationship with the influencer(s) first (commenting on their own blog, tweeting them to ask a question about their work or for a quote to

use in your work, etc.) and at the same time analyze the type of content they are already sharing, so that you can reflect this in your own posts. This strategy works because people love to share things they’ve been involved in, even if they weren’t directly responsible for putting it together.

*Re-share evergreen content*

As mentioned near the beginning of this book, automation on social media can, in the right circumstances, be very beneficial to you - a time saver, and a chance to give the content you slaved over as much exposure as possible. One case where this is certainly true is the automated scheduling and posting of evergreen blog content across multiple social networks, which can help to give it a new lease of life over and over again. For example, you could tweet a link to the same blog article two or three times in the same week, then keep the same frequency for the next few months using alternative post titles to see which performs best. Some ways that you might want to restyle a social media post featuring the same blog article - as an alternative to [post title] + [link], include: posing a question as a lead into the post, quoting a striking sentence or statistic from the article, or showing off just a little, e.g. "Our most popular read from last month..." My tool of choice is Buffer (http://www.bufferapp.com), which allows you to bulk-upload and organize content to be posted to Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and LinkedIn at a date and time of your choosing.

**Monitor progress with Google Analytics**

Use Google Analytics to monitor the volume and quality of search terms which are driving visitors to your site. Use the information you find to tailor the direction of new content - expand on the most popular topics and tweak or ditch those that aren't working quite as well. Check your Analytics regularly to ensure you're always on the pulse with what your readers like and want.

# General Strategy for Super Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is an ever-growing, ever-changing sector, but there are a number of core elements that will help you ensure a steady foundation to your social media ventures.

**5 Easy Ways to Promote Your Social Profiles and Gain Followers**

**Add your social profiles to your email signature**
Think about how many emails you send per day. Now imagine each email you send is a chance for someone new to find out about your social media profiles. Stick your social media URLs in your email signature along with a 'Like Us' call to action, and a reason why people should visit and 'like' your Page, e.g. *"Like us on Facebook for exclusive vouchers and discount codes!"*

**Blog about your social profiles, give reasons to follow**
If you have a company blog, why not create a post specifically to promote your social media presence? Give your readers five compelling reasons why they should 'Like' your fan pages in a blog post - e.g. exclusive offers, news to their feeds, sneak peeks at upcoming products. Don’t beg them to like you; just give reasons why they’ll benefit and watch the like box numbers trickle upwards.

**Promote your social media profiles in the real world**
Anywhere you can display your social media URLs is free advertising for you. Just think how many people would see a car bumper sticker with your Facebook address on, or a sign in the office or store window asking visitors to follow you on Twitter. In addition, combine offline and online by letting the people you meet in real life know about your social profiles, by getting their URLS printed on your business cards, letterheads, etc.

**Ask different sets of followers to like your other profiles**

If a person follows you on one social network, chances are good that they will want to follow you on another too. For example, give some compelling reasons to your Twitter followers as to why they should join your Facebook community, much as in the example for your blog post promotion mentioned above. A tweet might read, *"Great discussion about our newest garden tool range happening right now - get involved!* http://www.facebook.com/yourfacebookpage.*"* In addition, don't be afraid to directly promote your social profiles once in a while. Unlike the approach above, here you simply point people to your page with a message along the lines of *"Enjoying our tweets? Why not join us on Facebook too? Click here:* http://www.facebook.com/yourfacebookpage*"*. Create and save three or four different variations of this message, so that you don't repeat the same tweet over and over.

**Ask your email list to like your social profiles**
Got an email marketing list? Consider sending a dedicated email asking your subscribers to follow or like you on social networks - again with compelling reasons as to why they most definitely should. Whenever you send out future messages to them, include links to your social profiles underneath the main message.

## Social Media Marketing FAQs and Miscellaneous Advice

**Should I keep my social media posts short?**
While many studies will advise you to keep text in your social media posts to a minimum in order to cater to low attention spans and mobile users, my advice is different. The reason? Studies like these will have covered a spectrum that includes text-heavy posts with low engagement that are often the result of poor writing practices, and short posts like memes that only generate lots of cheap, low quality engagement. My advice is to put the *quality* of your written content first and see how a mixture of lengths affects your engagement rates, rather than worrying about sticking strictly to a set character limit.

**When is the best time to post on social media?**

Depending on which study you read, the "best" time to post on social media to maximize organic reach and engagement will differ wildly. Some will offer general guidance: advising you to post at the time of day when most people are likely to be checking social media, i.e. first thing in the morning and in the evenings. Others will recommend that you to use hard evidence - tools like Facebook Insights and its "When Your Fans Are Online" data, and Google Analytics' activity - to determine what time of day your posts receive the most engagement, and stick to posting around those hours. Alternatively, there's the "late night infomercial effect" school of thought. This states that you should post content in the twilight hours, at a time where there will be much less competition in peoples' news feeds, when an international audience (if you have one) is most likely to spot your updates, and to boost the chance that your posts might - as a result of being published at night - be the first thing fans see when they wake up in the morning. As goes the advice on similar issues, there is no "one size fits all" answer, so the key to finding out when *your* best time to post on social media is down to experimentation. Use all of the suggestions above to run a few tests, then tweak your strategy until you find the single method (or a combination) that works best for you. As always, re-evaluate your approach from time to time to ensure your posts are performing as well as they can be.

**Use emoticons to increase engagement**

Emoticons have long been used online as a way to express emotion with more lucidity than text alone can convey, and their significance rolls on into the social media era. A study by Amex Open found that using emoticons in status updates increased comments by an average of 33%, while a separate investigation by Buddy Media discovered that posts with emoticons received on average 57% more likes, 33% more comments and 33% more shares. Not all emoticons are created equal, however. The same study by Buddy Media found reported that the best three performing smileys were :D (very happy), :P (poking out tongue) and :-D (very happy including nose). Posts that garnered the least amount of interaction included emoticons like :o) (happy with round nose), ;) (winking) and <3 (love heart). On the topic of emoticons, it's worth knowing that Twitter, Vine and Snapchat all support the use of Emojis - fully-drawn, expressive emoticons and ideograms that

can add a whole new layer of fun and expression to your status updates; select them via the smileys option on your mobile device.

**Don't post for 'empty' engagement**

One of the biggest traps that lots of many businesses fall into is that of posting certain kinds of posts as bait to encourage likes and comments. The most obvious examples of this are *'Fill in the Blank'* and *'Click LIKE if you think X is X..."* sort of posts on Facebook. While these are great for occasional use, they do not give you a very accurate overview of fans and customers who are really engaged with your content, and how successful your efforts really are. Anybody can post an image of a cute kitten to get likes, but what real impact does it have on your fans' opinion of your brand?

**Search the web for social mentions of your brand**

While I've touched on the different ways that you can use individual social networks to discover and track mentions of your brand, one popular (and free!) "catch all" solution to see real-time activity, understand your content's reach, and get a top-down idea of your brand reputation, is SocialMention (http://www.socialmention.com).

Type in and search for your brand name and keywords related to your company, and experiment with the different filters found in the drop-down menu. For each mention found, the site provides a set of overall metrics particular to it, including the sources it is found at and whether people are interacting in a positive or negative fashion. Hover over each metric with your cursor for a short definition of each.

# Free and Premium Social Media Video Tutorials: 250+ Videos and 8+ Hours of Content

**Bite-sized YouTube video tutorials**
To support the content within this book, I record and post regular social media videos onto YouTube. No filler, just free, clear and simple information that will help you with your social media marketing. The majority of the videos are screen recordings, with my voice guiding you step-by-step, and each major set of tutorials is grouped together into playlists for easy viewing. There are over 250 videos so far and that number is growing all the time, so why not head over to check them out? And don't forget to subscribe to the channel, so that you're the first to see future tutorials!

**Subscribe to My YouTube Channel:**
http://www.youtube.com/500socialmediatips

**Comprehensive premium video courses**
I also offer premium video courses on the website Udemy - an interactive hub for people who have something to teach and people who want to learn. These courses are considerably longer and more detailed offerings than my YouTube uploads; fully comprehensive guides to help you master different social networks and other related topics from start to finish. You get lifetime access to all updates once you enroll, and can even interact with me right there on the site with any questions you may have. Sign up to my newsletter and you'll receive a deep discount as a thanks, too - details on how to do this in the next chapter.

**Enroll on my Udemy Courses:**
https://www.udemy.com/u/andrewmacarthy

# FREE E-book Updates FOREVER

The very nature of social media means that the tips and tricks in this book will need to be updated and amended often. To prevent you from being provided with out-of-date information, *500 Social Media Marketing Tips* is updated regularly. To see a summary of all the changes made to the book over time, please visit: http://bit.ly/500smmtupdateslog

**E-book version updates**

An updated version of *500 Social Media Marketing Tips* is uploaded to the Amazon Kindle store at the beginning of every month, complete with all of the changes made in the four weeks prior. **These updates are available for free.** Unfortunately, Amazon's processes mean that you may not be notified when a new update has been made available, and will need to request for it to be sent to your device. Contact the Kindle Customer service through the phone number listed below; lines are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

- U.S. and Canada: 1-866-216-1072
- International: 1-206-266-2992

The Kindle version of *500 Social Media Marketing Tips* is available at http://bit.ly/500kindle

**Paperback version updates**

Updating the paperback version of *500 Social Media Marketing Tips* is a little more challenging than its electronic cousin, so barring the requirement of a lot of important amendments, updates normally occur on **quarterly basis** - once for every season - spring, summer, fall, and winter. These updates will include all of the same tips from the electronic version of the book available at the time of printing. To check that you are buying the latest version, please look for indications of the version in the book's product description, on the front cover, and on the copyright page.

The paperback version of *500 Social Media Marketing Tips* is available at http://bit.ly/500paperback

**Get notified of updates by e-mail**

The best way to be reminded of when new versions of *500 Social Media Marketing Tips* are available for both Kindle and paperback is by signing up to my e-mail list. I'll also share with you news about any of my new books, and links to the latest and greatest blog posts and video tutorials I create. *I hate spam as much as you do, so I promise that these updates will remain infrequent.*

**FREE BONUS GIFT!**

Sign up today and I will send you a free PDF copy of my report, *10 Essential Elements for Facebook Page Branding.*

To sign up, visit www.andrewmacarthy.com and enter your e-mail address into the box at the top of the page.

# Download My Essential Social Media Marketing Premium Content Bundle

**What is the Premium Content Bundle?**

The Premium Content Bundle is a selection of incredibly useful social media marketing resources - instantly downloadable - to help you reach and surpass your social media marketing goals.

**What will I get?**

Download the Premium Content Bundle today and you'll gain instant access to all of the following:

- **16 Social Media Profile Branding Templates:** Expertly designed templates for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, and more.
- **Ideal Social Media Image Size List:** an at-a-glance view of the optimum image sizes to use for posts, profile design, and ads for the biggest social networks.
- **Social Media Strategy Plan Questionnaire:** 24 questions to help you plan and shape a social media marketing strategy tailored to your business.
- **2 Social Media Content Calendars:** plan and chart your social media marketing posts in advance for a more stress-free, optimized content strategy. Covers all the major social networks.
- **Social Media Strategy Progress Tracker**: Easily track and chart the growth of your social profiles over time – followers, referral traffic, and more.
- **Social Media Competitor Analysis Questionnaire:** A questionnaire and chart to help you analyse your main competition on social media. Use the information you gather to inspire your own content strategy tactics, and outperform your rivals!
- **50% off my premium Udemy video courses:** Half-price access to my top-rated Udemy video courses, *How to Use Instagram for Business* and *How to Use Snapchat for Business*.

- **10% off my Social Media Marketing Services:** an instant discount on all of my consultancy and design services. Nice!

**How much is the Premium Content Bundle?**

The Premium Content Bundle costs **$7.00 (USD**), and there are two payment options:

1. Purchase access for a one-off $7.00 to grab all the goodies within a 30-day time frame, **OR**

2. Purchase a subscription for $7.00 per month to show your ongoing support for me and my work (free Kindle book updates, blog posts, video tutorials, etc.) and to have *unlimited* access to all of the latest/updated Premium Bundle Content wherever and whenever you like.

**Where do I purchase the Premium Content Bundle?**

For more information about the Premium Content Bundle goodies and to purchase yours, visit

www.andrewmacarthy.com/premium

# I Need You: Help Make This Book Even Better!

**Outdated, not-working tips**

As hard as I work to keep the content of *500 Social Media Marketing Tips* as fresh and up-to-date as possible, small details and technicalities can fall through the cracks. If you try out a tip or instruction and notice that it is out of date, no longer working as it should, please, *please* let me know via the contact details in the “About the Author” section of this book so that I can rectify the issue in the next version.

**Typos and grammar**

The same as the above goes for typos or grammatical errors. I do my best to weed them out as often as possible, but as the book is updated so frequently, there is always a chance that they will sneak their way in! If you spot any glaring errors that you think need my attention immediately, do get in touch, so I can change them at the first available opportunity. Thank you very much!

**Got a tip to share?**

If you have a tip that you think deserves a place in any section of *500 Social Media Marketing Tips*, then drop me a line via the "About the Author" section. I'd love to feature you and your genius little ideas!

# Hire Me: Social Media Design, Analysis and Management

Since writing *500 Social Media Marketing Tips*, I have been contacted by many businesses who want help with their social media strategy - either from the beginning of their venture, or just for reassurance that they are on the right path. I am pleased to say that I offer a range of tailor-made, affordable one-off services and ongoing consultation packages to build and manage social media marketing for your business. My rates are very reasonable and negotiable dependent on your needs and budget. Services offered include:

- Social Media Strategy Audit / Analysis
- Social Media Profile Setup and Design
- Social Profile Management and Audience Building
- Social Media Strategy and Profile Design Analysis And Recommendations

If you would like more information on pricing or would like to get me on board to help you with social media in any way, please visit the 'Hire Me' page at my website, http://www.andrewmacarthy.com or email me on amacarthy85@gmail.com

I look forward to hearing from you!

# About the Author



Andrew Macarthy is a blogger and social media consultant from Swansea in Wales, UK. His #1 Web Marketing Kindle Bestseller, *500 Social Media Marketing Tips*, helped thousands of businesses with simple, practical advice to optimize their social media activity and make the most of the sector's marketing opportunities.

In his spare time, Andrew enjoys running, Nintendo videogames, acoustic guitar, and Swansea City FC.

**Any Feedback or Questions?**
Email me at amacarthy85@gmail.com or contact me via my website or the following social networks:

Website / blog: http://www.andrewmacarthy.com
Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/500socialmediatips
Twitter: http://www.twitter.com/andrewmacarthy
Pinterest: http://www.pinterest.com/andrewmacarthy
YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/user/500socialmediatips

# One Last Thing...

If you found this book helpful and believe it is worth sharing, please would you take a few seconds to let your friends know about it? If it turns out to make a difference in their lives, they'll be forever grateful to you, as will I.

In addition, if you have a few moments now to leave a short review on the Amazon product page, please, please do. Something that only takes you a few moments will help me out today and for years to come.

All the best, and thank you so much for reading *500 Social Media Marketing Tips*.

Andrew.